

A STUDY COMMENTARY
ON THE BOOK OF

REVELATION

BASED UPON THE SUNDAY MINISTRIES
TO THE
WOODENHILL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
BETWEEN 1984 AND 1987
By M.A.W.

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FOREWORD

This volume is the product of the notes from a series of ministries given to the Woodenhill Christian Fellowship (originally the Great Hollands Independent Christian Fellowship) between the years 1984 and 1987.

The reader is encouraged to use it to **study** the book of Revelation in relation to the scriptures as a whole. For this reason the texts quoted have not been typed in full. It is hoped that because of this, the wider context of the references will be examined and reflected upon.

Every attempt has been made to show the **method** of exposition and the conclusions that arise from adopting a certain approach to interpretation. If the foundations are not true, the building will be unstable. The reader is therefore encouraged to question the principles of interpretation laid out in this volume.

The idea behind this form of commentary, is that the reader will not just gather information from the writer, rather they will educate themselves and thereby obtain a greater insight into The Word of God as a whole.

We live in an age where little time is given to study and this is often supplemented by the "quick fix" paperback that guarantees to make you a competent theologian at one sitting. Christians are liable to absorb all manner of strange ideas and heresies by this method, without understanding how they were derived. "Take heed how you hear", applies to this work also. If you find error, it should be clear where the wrong turning was made. In that event you are encouraged to graciously correct the author.

Mike Winnett. First edition: 27th August 1992

Revision 1: 28th October, 2000

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Since we completed this series, some who listened to it have now entered the reality of the presence of Christ "which is far better". Sadly some others have walked away from the Lord and their time is running out. For the rest we are nearing the end of our pilgrimage

Our position on the book of Revelation has not changed over the intervening years as the great day becomes nearer than when we first started our journey.

I wish to thank my daughter Shelley who encouraged this revision and proof read and suggested improvements to the format and content (we did not have personal computers when we started this book). It is thanks to her that this is now online.

MAW
March 2016

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

If we do not establish the purpose and scope of this volume we shall in all probability multiply our error as we go deeper into it. It is not the Revelation (Apocalypse) of John, but of Jesus (genitive). Do we mean then "Of the things given by Jesus" or "Of the person of Jesus"?

In (2 Thess 1 v 7) the genitive relates to the appearance of the person of Christ at His coming, which I take as the sense in (1 Pet 1 v 7). In (Rom 2 v 5), revelation is again the subject and here it is of righteousness. In (Rom 16 v 25) it is again the revelation of the subject, mystery, and here we see revelation meaning manifestation.

So then, by common usage, I take it that this book is dealing with an unveiling or manifestation of Christ. In his Gospel, John revealed Christ as the Son of God (John 20 v 30 - 31), but I take it that Revelation does not really have that as its thrust. In his epistles we see the mediatorial comforter aspect (1 John 2 v 1) where Christ draws us into fellowship and maintains that fellowship, and that is not really the thrust of Revelation. The nature of Christ as it unfolds in Revelation will become apparent, but let us not lose sight that this is a Christ centred book. Christ is the subject!

We must also accept that natural man, by natural reason, cannot arrive at an understanding of Revelation. The prophets sought to come to grips with the spirit within them (1 Pet 1 v 10-12). It required God to give them the word (Rev 1 v 1) but also the Spirit (1 Cor 2 v 9 ff). If we lived in a mechanistic universe, logic would enable us to predict cause and event even if the event is chaos. Revelation would be the logical outcome of events, not the uncovering of secret plans. It can be argued then that revelation itself is a prime argument against a mechanistic universe and grounds whereby we are comforted that things in this world do not always end as we might predict in gloom and desolation, but in glory, because God is Lord of time! Discontinuities (like the Noah's flood) cannot be predicted. The reverse is equally true. Economic stability does not ensure peace (Jeremiah 51 v 31), in God's system.

Revelation therefore confirms a blessing to those of us who HEAR and READ and KEEP its writing (Rev 1 v 3). This is a unique statement in scripture which brackets the book (Rev 1 v 3 to Rev 22 v 7). The words '**hearing**' and '**reading**' are easy to understand. '**Keeping**' (Gk. τηροῦντες) is a little more difficult. In (Mat 19 v 17) it is synonymous with obey. In (Acts 27 v 6) it means to guard as also in (Mat 27 v 36). In (John 17 v 15) it has the sense of protect, as perhaps (1 John 5 v 18). The sense then is of "watching" and of observation, as of one observing circumstance. It is an attitude that we have to develop towards this neglected book, because it will bless us and it will govern our minds and attitudes - and the time is at hand (Rev 1 v 3). For Jesus this term expressed immediacy (Mat 26 v 18). The things must take place quickly (Gk. ταχῆι from TACHOS- whence tachometer) (Rev 1 v 1). As in (Acts 12 v 7) the fulfilment is not delayed.

However, I will offer us a caution, and it is one bound up in the history of error, where men have occupied themselves with the date fixing. Any delays introduced by God in His plan are

for the sake of His people to grant them repentance (2 Pet 3 v 7 - 10). God does not delay for His own sake, as men do, to gain advantage (2 Pet 3 v 9), for example delaying to pay your bills. God does it for the sake of others. God is not governed by time in the way that we are. For Him it is all the same that one day is as a thousand years or vice versa. Henry Alford was wise to note that "We know little now of relative nearness and distance in point of time; when the day of the Lord shall have opened our eyes to the true measure, we shall see how near He always was".

I am further constrained by the words of Jesus (Acts 1 v 6 - 7). Our curiosity often leads us beyond the "What" to the "When" such that we forget the "What". In (1 Pet 1 v 10), the prophets sought out "What", and what time ("When"). I think that they knew more of the "What" than the "When". There are occasions when God gives us times (Gen 15 v 13, Jer 25 v 11), and there is no veiling of the language in such predictions. If God will give us an earthly date, I am sure that it is not in mystic terms. I will therefore suggest that as we delve into this book, that we do so with a sense of its imminence and with an eye towards understanding the substance, the what, the broad principals of its history, rather than speculate on date fixing (i.e. 1843 (Baptists), 1914 (JW's etc)). Let us heed the words of (Deut 29 v 29).

The book of Revelation then, comes to us through Christ, via an Angel, to John the witness. John, and I take it to be the same John who wrote the Gospel and the Epistle, was a witness of Christ's ministry (1 John 1 v 1 - 4). Any discrepancy that John saw in this vision and the life of Christ would have been immediately apparent. John is convinced that it is of Christ, the same Christ he knew in Jerusalem. It made such an impact that he urges upon his hearers, that "they are blessed", by attending it, and just like Daniel (Dan 7 v 28) it is to occupy part of our lives. Why then we might well ask, is it so neglected or abused? Firstly, I think because it could not be readily understood, perhaps due to the way in which it is approached. Secondly, there is a misconception of the value of prophecy, that is, that it is of value only to those whose faith it confirms, perhaps by a false reading of (1 Pet 1 v 12). However, it has as a design, encouragement (Rom 15 v 4). It is the certainty of prophecy that enables us to endure present circumstances, (Heb 12 v 2). For Abraham it is the Divine 'carrot' to accept his own day and age (Gen 15 v 13-15).

Further, the book of Revelation not only confirms the joy of final victory over sin, it reveals God as omniscient and omnipotent over the history of the world. It may pass, that we miss out many things as we study this book, but if we come away with stronger faith because we have taken a fresh vision of Christ's power we shall indeed have reaped a blessing. In fact Revelation holds many blessings:

- Chapter 1 v 3 for hearing and reading
- Chapter 14 v 13 for dying in Christ
- Chapter 16 v 15 for keeping integrity
- Chapter 19 v 19 for being called to God's table
- Chapter 20 v 6 for a part in the first resurrection
- Chapter 22 v 7 for keeping the words

CHAPTER 2.

THE LORDS DAY AND THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

There is often an attempt to make the seven churches spiritual symbols of the various state of contemporary faith in the churches of Christ. But why doubt that the book of Revelation is a particular letter to specific and historical churches? The relevance to us of this letter to the seven churches, as a whole, is the fact that the church is a commonwealth. Ephesians (4 v 4) states that there is "One body", hence one commonwealth. This is the basis for sharing all of the letters, epistles, and prophecies, just as Paul encourages the circulation of the truth (Col 4 v 16). We are here sharing with our brothers and sisters in a previous age, just as we share the letters that Peter and Paul wrote.

Our map shows us that the island of Patmos, lying in the Aegean, that well known Greek holiday region, facing the land mass of Asia Minor (Rev 1 v 4) which is the modern day Turkey. You will observe that there are other biblical church establishments in the region, particularly the famous Colosse, which is not mentioned. We can only surmise why these seven churches are here chosen, perhaps because they each summed-up the peculiar problems of the day, but we would be foolish to think that the other churches i.e. Colosse, Troas, Miletus and **particularly** our own are exempt from the warnings. The bible teaches that things that befall others may have a direct bearing upon us and our behaviour (Luke 13 v 45, 1 Cor 10 v 11). I am sure that the Colossians did not breath a sign of relief and say, "We're OK! we are not mentioned".



The location of the churches.

We have so far suggested the authorship, title, place and persons addressed by this letter, now we must turn to the time, and (Rev 1 v 9 - 10), has led to a traditional view which diverges from the recognised principles of biblical interpretation. Again we might find ourselves plucking biblical concepts out of context and framing them in our own language or ideas (e.g. baptism, Sabbath, church, house of God etc). In (Rev 1 v 10). So it is that the Lord's Day has come to mean Sunday (the day after the Sabbath or the first day of the week).

I cannot better sum up this error than by reading to you some correspondence that I have had with the Lord's Day Observance Society (personal correspondence 9th August 1977, from J G Roberts, General Secretary). This will serve as a basis for our examination of the teaching. This is part of his reply:

"I must point out that the word "Sabbath" does not mean Saturday, as many people believe. The word "Sabbath" means rest or pause from the daily duties which occupy our attention. Therefore, it is not necessarily so, that God had a special reference to Saturday being the rest day. The teaching was that God was giving one day out of the seven for rest. ***The Jewish nation adopted their day of rest as Saturday. We, as Christians, accept our Christian Sabbath, which means Christian Rest Day.*** This ***clears*** the query of the absence of mentioning the word "Sunday" in the Scriptures, just as there is no reference to the word "Saturday". The Jewish people have Saturday as their Sabbath, ***the Christians have Sunday as their Lord's Day.....From the teaching of Scripture***, it seems quite clear to us that the ***Lord's Day was our Sunday***, as the day when we remember the Risen Lord, and we find that ***throughout the Scripture, there is much teaching concerning this.***" (Italics mine MAW).

I trust that you will all have seen that the dogmatic rather than the exegetical approach is used by the man, together with the fact that supporting texts are in short supply. This "a priori" approach is really this; it is feeding a conclusion backwards into the text rather than drawing a conclusion from the text. We can illustrate this approach from the example concerning the rebuilding of the earthly temple. Those who see the rebuilding as necessary do so because they see a restored earthly Israel and presume that this involves a temple.

Therefore, they conclude an earthly temple must be built, and this is fed back into the scripture. To the contrary, the exegetical approach (which literally means "leading out", i.e. leading out of scripture) offers us no demand for a rebuilt Solomon's (Herod's?) temple, and no statement that it will be built or should be built. To the contrary, the transfer of the earthly temple to the spiritual is seen in the person of Christ and his people (John 2 vv 19 - 21 *But he spake of the temple of his body*).

This "feedback" approach has happened in (Rev 1 v 10) in as much as people have seen "Lord's Day" and equated it with the "first day of the week", therefore, Sunday is equal to the Lord's Day. If we search the scripture, there is no supporting link to make the first day = Lord's Day.

I can with little difficulty, exegetically put the Sabbath in relation to the First Day (c.f. Mat 28 v 1, Mark 16 v 1). From this we can conclude that the First Day is the day after the Sabbath. If the

Sabbath were a Saturday, then the first Day would be Sunday. Now you see, by using this method of scripture for scripture we can come to a conclusion. There is however, no biblical evidence to even begin to equate first day with Lord's Day.

The term "Day 1" and its relation to "Day 7" or Rest is first seen in (Gen 1 v 5 and 2 v 3). We have already established that the first day is the day after the Sabbath. Throughout the N.T. (i.e. Mark 16 v 2, John 20 v 1, Acts 20 v 7, 1 Cor 16 v 2) this term First Day is used for the day of collections and for breaking bread.

The term Lord's Day is never used to describe this day. The date of (1 Corinthians and Acts 20) is about 59 A.D., this one can deduce from internal mathematics. The Gospel has spread far and wide through Jewish and Gentile communities, but there had been not attempt to call the First Day a Sabbath or Lord's Day. No-one had switched Sabbath to First Day.

Perhaps more interesting, though I stress speculative, is the late date of John's Gospel (circ. 89 A.D.) that shows the late usage of this term. However, it would seem strange whatever date it was written that John should use one term in his gospel and another in his Revelation, without any explanation for the change. By explanation I mean, something like (John 19 v 31).

The earliest reference to Lord's Day being equated to first Day or Sunday is by Dionysius Bishop of Corinth (A.D. 175), "Today we kept the Lord's Day in which we read your letter". The term Sun-day was used by Justin Martyr (AD 140 - 155), "Suns-day is the day that we all hold our common assembly".

I am suggesting by this, that the modern practice of calling Sunday the Lord's Day is a tradition developed much later than the time of the Apostles. If you ask why I have laboured this, it is because I want us to get our terms correct and also to establish a correct interpretation of scripture?

We still have not made any sense of the words Lord's Day. The word should perhaps be better translated "I was in Spirit in (Greek preposition. εν) the Lord's Day". In (1 Cor 4 v 3) we have a similar expression "Man's Day". "Man's day" is the day in which Man is judged by Man, it is not therefore essential that it be a day of 24 hours.

The early context of Revelation (Ch 1 v 1, 1 v 7) leads us toward the thought of judgement, indeed this subject unfolds throughout the book. This is borne out from O.T. usage (Is 13 v 9), The Day of destruction. The Lord's Day reveals the judgements of God.

The scene is set. John is in spirit (Not on earth as it were) and set before him is the tapestry of judgement. He sees God's plan for the judgement of mankind from God's viewpoint. Our task is to seek the Spirit so that we can understand the temporal events and principles involved.

Summary

- Sabbath is the day before the first day of the week.
- Sunday is not a biblical term.
- There is no transfer of the name Sabbath to Sunday in the New Testament.
- "Lord's Day" is NEVER equated to or associated with "first day" or "Sabbath" in scripture.

CHAPTER 3. Revelation 1 v 4

John commences the delivery of his message with the salutation (v 4) very similar to the Pauline openings (Rom 1 v 7, 1 Cor 1 v 3). These openings are important since they convey authority. The writer is not saying, "Greetings from me", but, "Greetings from the Lord Himself". He is the God of now (primarily, but He always was and is the coming One (Greek: *ho erchomenos*). This is a title of the Lord Jesus (Mat 11 v 3). The very use of this name implies that all is not finished with the world, and that a visitation is essential to His final purpose on earth. These three ascriptions (is, was and is to come) are, I think, descriptions of God in relation to His people, whereas in (verse 8) we have the description of God as He is in Himself, The Alpha and Omega.



From before this "awful throne" comes a greeting from the Seven Spirits (verse 4). There is a lot of conjecture as to who or what they symbolise. Many notable commentators suggest that they represent the sevenfold fullness of the Holy Spirit (Is 11 v 2, Is 61 v 1). I am not happy with this explanation. For one thing it personifies attributes, mixing a greeting from a person and a "gift". ((I am not saying however, that personification is non-scriptural) see Prov 8 v 12).

Another view is that the Seven Spirits are persons.

In (Rev 1 v 20) we find Seven Stars and Seven Lamps of gold. The Stars are Angels and the lamps are Seven Assemblies. In (Rev 4 v 5) we find that Seven Lamps are also Seven Spirits of God. Now before we jump at the conclusion that the Seven Spirits are the Seven Assemblies, let us look at the Word.

(Rev 1 v 20)	7 stars	=	7 lamps (Gk: luchnia)
(Rev 1 v 20)	7 angels	=	7 churches
(Rev 4 v 5)	7 Spirits of God	=	7 lamps (Gk: lampas)

In (Rev 1 v 20 as in verse 12) luchna is specifically a Lampstand or the bearer of the light. This draws us back to the tabernacle symbolism of the Manorah or Seven Branched Candlestick. Obviously the Assembly is not the light, but it does carry it to the world. Jesus is the light (John 8 v 12, 9 v 5, Eph 5 v 8, 14). Hence, the privilege of bearing this light is removed from the unworthy (Rev 2 v 5).

The word for Lamp, is luchnos (from the Gk: luoo meaning dissipate, and nux meaning night, hence to dissipate the night), as in (Luke 15 v 8) or lampas (Mat 25 v 1). The former is used indoors, and is the little clay dish with a pinched spout that fitted into an alcove or ledge. The latter, lampas, is for outdoor use and is more properly a torch which is composed of rags soaked in oil. This makes sense, since the little domestic lamp would be of little use out of doors. So in (Rev 8 v 10) a falling Star is described as a torch. In (Rev 4 v 5) the word for lamps is lampados or torches. So on the basis of the greek, we cannot equate (Rev 1 v 20) and (Rev 4 v 5) making the Seven Spirits equal to the Seven Churches. In (Rev 5 v 6) the Seven Spirits are the eyes of God. In (Zech 4 v 10) the eyes are the eyes of Jehovah which survey the earth.

Conclusion: The 7 stars are not equal to the 7 Spirits of God.

The greeting John (Rev 1 v 4) lays before us a manifestation of God as the eternal presence and surveyor of all His Church (The pantokrator v 8). He is however, much more, He is the "First born of the dead" (prototokos). This term is used in Colossians (1 v 15, v 18) of Christ. It is used of the temporal birth of Christ (Mat 1 v 25) where Jesus is Mary's prototokos, a term of pre-eminence. I take it as a term of pre-eminence when applied to Christ concerning His resurrection. Clearly others came back from the dead before Him, but since he is the source of the resurrection power in all ages, He is pre-eminent.

Incidentally it is of interest to note that when God speaks of begetting the Son (Ps 2 v 7) He is not talking about the temporal birth of Christ. Acts (13 v 32-35) shows us that it is in fact a reference to the resurrection. Jesus was begotten "this day" from the grave!

Christ is the true leader of men out of the grave (Spiritually and physically) whereas satan leads men into the grave. Christ is also the true leader of the rulers of men (Rev 1 v 5). "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Rev 19 v 16). This means that all rulers owe their allegiance to Christ and obedience to His word, in practice however, they fornicate (Rev 17 v 18, 18 v 19).

I think that as we go through Revelation (see 1 v 5) we shall see that these three statements about Christ establish:

- 1) That He is the faithful martyr
- 2) That He is the preeminent Lord of Life
- 3) That He is King of Kings.

Revelation shows us how these things are enforced.

At present these things are known to the elect of God. There is no open and outward proving to all men that this is so. Hence we are laughed at and mocked on account of our beliefs. It is also because of this that deceivers can flourish in the world and draw men after them (Mark 13 v 31). This is not to be forever the case. It should be of great comfort to the Christian that God will vindicate him when He comes in His open splendour (Rev 1 v 7, Mark 13 v 24 - 27). God will prove Himself and there will be no arguing, only lament, when God puts the sickle into the harvest (Rev 14 v 14 - 16).

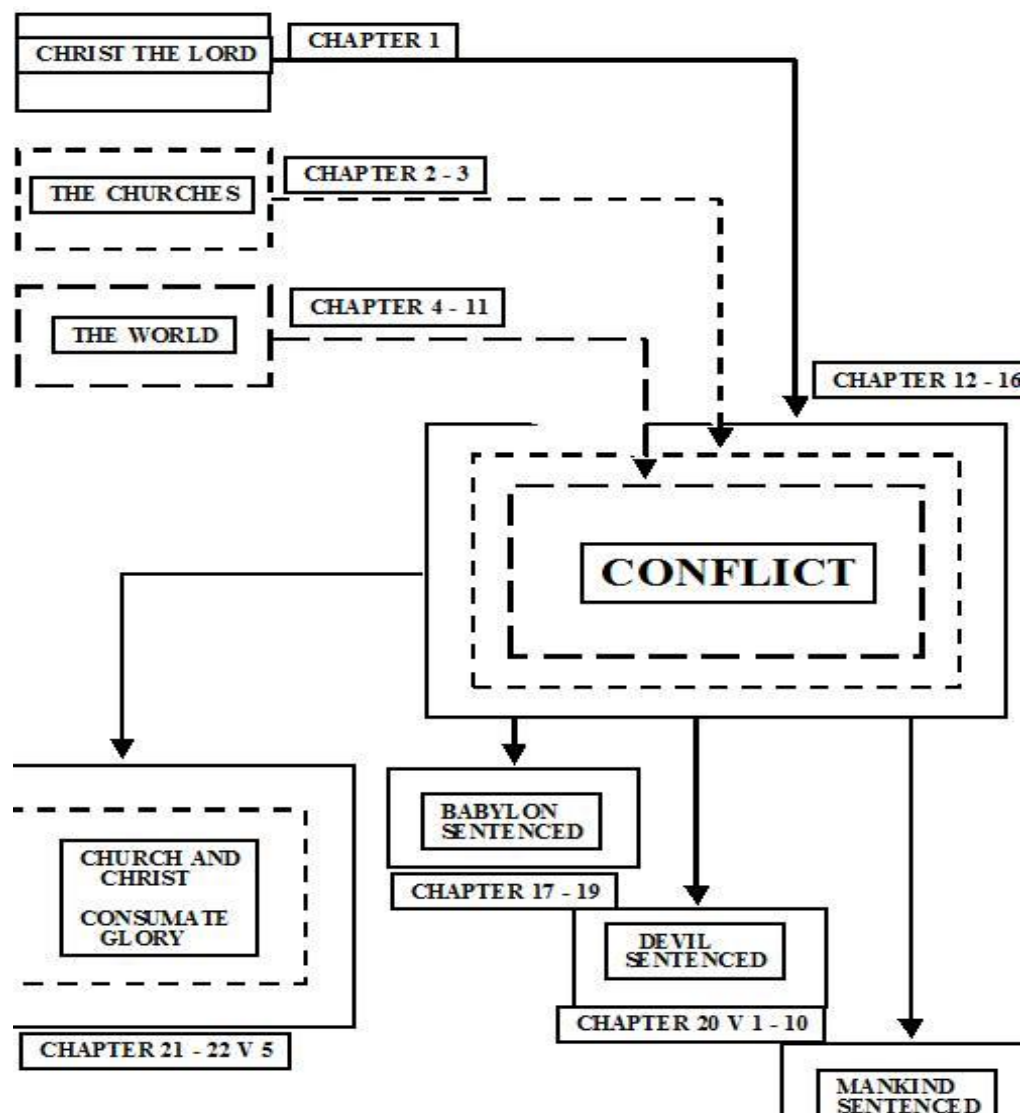
It is not done in secret, but openly, since all eyes will be on the event. There is no partial here or there coming (Mark 13 v 21) or secret invisible coming. It is for all to see. The earth will be filled with wailing and mourning. Perhaps, because then they will see the eternal hopelessness and irreversibility of their position and the approaching judgement (Rev 6 v 15 - 17). I am sure that much of the weeping in hell (Mat 24 v 51) is caused by the knowledge of an opportunity irretrievably lost.

We now more specifically turn to the letters to the seven churches (Rev 2 v 1 to Rev 3 v 22). The vision knocks John over (v 17) but he revives to be told just Who he is dealing with. In (v 8) The Lord God is First and Last, here we see Christ taking this title (v 17). He calls to John to write what he has seen, the things that are and the things to come (v 19).

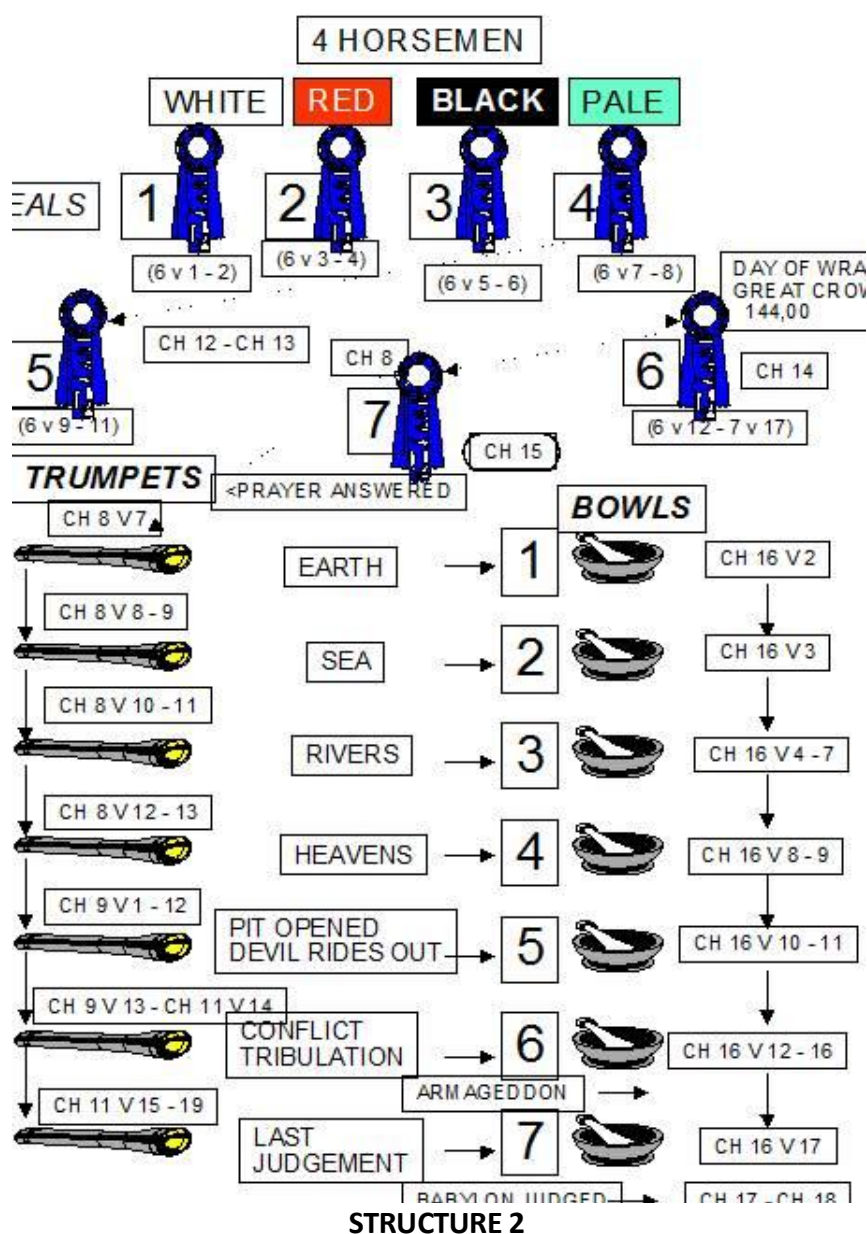
Revelation therefore deals with some current and past events (Are) and future events (To Come). The first section to the Seven Churches I take to be the current event section. After that we move on to see the outcome of world history past and future.

EPHESUS.

We have now laid open the introduction of this letter and established its relevance to us **today** by that commonwealth of knowledge shared by the churches. We have yet to establish a structure within it and D.V. we shall attempt to do so now. Here are two breakdowns.



STRUCTURE 1



Structures enable us to view the writings as a whole and to avoid contextual errors. Take for example the often misquoted or incompletely quoted verse in Romans (10 v 4), 'Christ is the end of the Law'. The interpretation offered is, that Christ has 'put an end to the law'. However, if we look at the language and quote it in full, we see that, " Christ is the end (Gk.telos aim or goal, whence TELEscope, something that sees into the distance or to the end) of the law for righteousness to every one that believes". TELOS is the aim or goal of the law, that is, that it leads not to righteous on its own, but through law to Christ Himself. The idea is brought out in Galatians (4 v 24) where the law is a schoolmaster, bringing us to justification, not by works of law, but by faith in Christ. If we had come to terms with the structure of Romans we would have seen that justification by faith is a central theme, not the negating of law.

In the Psalms we have also seen a structure by the application of acrostics¹ (Ps 119). John's

¹ Acrostic: The lines of the Psalm begin with successive letters of the alphabet.

gospel is also structured around its subject (John 20 v 31). Acts of Apostles is structured around the growth of the church (Acts 1 vv 8 - 9), a historical structure. Luke is structured around faith (Luke 1 vv 1 - 3) in a methodical manner. I believe that God structures His word in a methodical fashion relevant to His purpose. God is a God of order (1 Cor 14 v 33) as all His works show.

The major confusion arising in Revelation comes from a failure to see any coherence or structure in the book. In fact, there may be a series of themes and sub-structures, but there is an overall structure that we should seek to understand. The main structure is built around (Rev 1 v 1), "The Revelation of Jesus Christ".

The diagram (see STRUCTURE 1) shows a general structure looking at the elements involved and the ultimate purpose of Christ in the consummate glory of His church. This outline does not sift out the events, so I have produced a sub-structure in the second diagram (STRUCTURE 2), that shows the details of the main structure, where there are the sequences of trumpets and seals. We might be led to consider after a cursory reading that the trumpets and seals are sequential events, but I would suggest that they are parallel. By this I mean that Revelation repeats itself looking at the same events again from a different perspective.

We have already noticed that the Bible repeats itself and not without purpose. We see this in the book of Exodus, dealing with the Tabernacle, where the design details are written two times. We also see repetition in the books of Kings and Chronicles.

It would appear then that Revelation repeats itself. For example, the 144,000 are mentioned in chapter 7 and chapter 14. The seventh seal, which initiates the '**trumpet**' sequence, has a parallel in the '**bowl**' sequence. It is not our purpose here to discover why, but to point out this possibility. Interspersed with these images are enlargements or detailed cameos on particular issues such as the fall of Babylon and the great Consummation.

For the present it will suffice to see that there are definite structures in the book. We may not be able to do any temporal date fixing, but we should be able to gain some idea of the sequence concerning the last things. Incidentally, our curiosity over dating should be tempered by Christ's words at the ascension (Acts 1 v 7).

Let us return to look at the Seven churches and Ephesus in particular.

The gospel had a profound effect upon the Ephesians (Acts 19). Paul laboured there for over two years (Acts 19 v 10). The power over evil convinced this idolatrous people to dispatch their idols to the fire (Acts 19 v 19) and perhaps this was their first work (Rev 2 v 5). Ephesus was the centre of an industry, manufacturing idols (Acts 20 v 27). Who says that the church has no right to speak on economics!

The epistle to this church is one of the main stays of the so called Calvinistic teachings (Eph 1 v 11, 2 v 8). If we were to put them into a modern denominational slot, we might call them Reformed Baptists. However, they also acknowledged the gifts of the Spirit and the reality of 'tongues and prophecy' (Acts 19 v 6). They also appear to be a church greatly concerned over

sound doctrine and the effects of error (Rev 2 v 2 - 6).

In the midst of all this correctness, and let us not belittle this, for it is right, there is a great blemish. "Thou hast left thy first love". What we should ask is intended by this condemnation? What is the first love?

Is it doctrine? I think not. They use sound doctrine (Rev 2 v 2) in which they do not weary (v 3). In their lives, they are a church 'going on with the Lord', to use a modern phrase, "holding fast the faithful word". Life in this church might be seen as the doctrinal firmness and stand for righteousness. Let us all learn a lesson and heed a warning. Exposing false cults, false prophets and evil men, is not the whole duty of the church. Clearly, from chapter 2, this is not so. These things are part of our duty, to be sure, but not the whole duty. What they lack is "first love" and that single omission is about to cause the church to lose its privilege of bearing a testimony; being a lampstand for the Lord!

Is the "first love" Jesus? Again I think not. I think that they endure life not for their own selfish reasons, but for Christ (v3). It is perhaps a misguided love or imperfect love, but for Christ they endure.

What then is their "first love"? I think that their condemnation arises from their lack of love to the Saints. When Paul was with the Ephesians, he observed that they loved the Saints. It was part of their fame (Eph 1 v 15). I believe that the Spirit shows Paul the days when this will not be so, therefore Paul reminds them of their calling to love and unity (Eph 4 v 1 - 3).

It is quite easy to be taken up with doctrine at the expense of genuine compassion to man in his sinful state (Luke 18 v 9 - 14). It is easy to be selfish and unconcerned for God's people (Matt 24 v 40 - 46). That is why I suggested an imperfect love for Christ. If we truly love Jesus, we shall love His people. We shall love to serve them, minister to them, give to them and even lay down our lives for them. Why? Because we want to do all within our power to secure their glory and enjoy their presence with Christ. This is one of the tests of our spiritual life, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3 v 14).

When sin entered, God barred the way to the tree of life (Gen 3 v 24). Adam and Eve had come to know "good and evil" and they chose this rather than life! We should seek to attain **life**, that is the goal of the church, yet so often we lose sight of this goal. This warning comes not just to Ephesus (v 7) but to the assemblies. That is to you and I! If we are not "overcomers", if we do not conquer through Christ, we shall be forever dead.

WARNING: Tolerate doctrinal error at your peril.

CHAPTER 5. (Revelation 2 v 8 - 11)

SMYRNA

This city was noted for its fine monetary system, schools of medicine and science. It also had a 20,000 seat theatre and it was famous for its liquorice roots!

For us Christians it is more noted for its persecutions. In the middle ages the (Mongols) persecuted Christians, incorporating 1,000 of their skulls into a tower. Here the disciple of John, Polycarp (AD70 - 155) died. At the ripe old age of 86 he was burned to death because he refused to revile Christ. "How can I blaspheme the King who saved me," he said. Smyrna means bitterness, and for the Saints that sums it up!

In the midst of this prosperous and cultured city lived poor, and troubled Christians. There are no theological grounds for expecting a bed of roses in Christ, more likely a bed of thorns. This church is a New Testament example of Job's suffering (Job 2 v 1 - 3). It is a test of integrity (Job 2 v 3). We see in our society today, when men are stripped of their wealth and suffer hardship as the miners are doing during the current (1984) strike, that they tend to lose integrity. They have nothing else to lose seemingly, and they will go to any lengths to secure their ends. Not so the poor Christians.

Poverty is not enough for these people. God has more tribulation in store. They are in tribulation (Rev 2 v 9) and they go through more tribulation. Tribulation (Gk.Thliboo) is a word that comes from pressing grapes. The Thessalonians suffer it (1 Thess 3 v 4, 2 Thess 1 v 4 and 6). A good description of affliction is seen in (Acts 7 v 10 - 11), and it covers imprisonment and famine.

This church teaches us not to dwell upon the worth of material prosperity, and from Christ's point of view, they are rich (Rev 2 v 8). True wealth is to be had in spiritual values and integrity.

Amongst their persecutors are those who call themselves Jews (Rev 2 v 8). If anyone has any idea that the physical Jews were the chosen people they should consider these words of Christ from heaven, they are '**a synagogue of satan**'. Philadelphia (Rev 3 v 9) suffered at the same hands.

Jews, let us remind ourselves, are in the N.T., people who have clean hearts (Rom 2 v 29). However, in the midst of trials and at the prospect of trials, Christ says from heaven, "Fear not". The trial was to be short, namely **ten days**. This may have been a spiritual number and by this a pointer elsewhere. I find its significance in Daniel (Ch 1 v 8 - 16, cf v 12). Daniel and his companions were adamant that they would not pollute themselves with 'the kings delicate food' and they were 'proved' **ten days** after which they were no longer under an obligation to the royal diet.

Perhaps the Christians at Smyrna looked back to the book of Daniel, and saw that in this period of time, God brought these faithful men through their trial in one piece. This we might consider as being brought through alive in the flesh, although this is never the prime consideration in

scripture. For Christians, spiritual survival is what counts. Daniel survived spiritually and so will Smyrna.

"Be faithful unto death", and you will win the crown of life (Rev 2 v 10), and that is what counts. To overcome means that the second death is avoided (Rev 2 v 11) and we are now by this pointer thrown forward to (Rev 20 v 6), where this concept is laid before us and it is a key to that chapter.

Let us pause to ask what is signified by this '**second death**' in this chapter 20 of Revelation.

1. That the first resurrection is physical and the Saints reign on earth with Christ. According to this view this is yet to come. After the loosing of satan, we have a literal second resurrection and the final judgement.
2. The other view is that this first resurrection is spiritual, that the Millennium is now and that the second resurrection is physical.

We must first ascertain, though, what the '**first death**' is. You cannot have a '**first resurrection**' without a 'first death'. In scripture, this 'first death' is in Genesis (2 v 17), and men are already dead (Mat 8 v 22, Eph 2 v 1). Death is primarily death of the soul and this leads us to further see why the term "sleep" is applied to the Saints (John 11 v 11 - 14) [do not confuse this with the false doctrine of soul sleep]. Christians do not die spiritually, they merely go through a transition. The rich man dies physically (Luke 16) as does Lazarus, except that there is with Lazarus a transition, a transition to a more glorious state as far as the soul is concerned. He is translated to Abraham's bosom fully conscious.

What then quickens the soul? For the Saint it is a resurrection, a raising from the dead (Eph 2 v 5 - 6, a making alive together with Christ, Col 2 v 12 - 13, 1 John 3 v 14). Hence we have scriptural evidence that the soul dies in Adam (1 Cor 15 v 22) and is made alive again in Christ and this has **NOW** elevated us to the heavenly realms (Heb 12 v 32, Eph 2 v 36). Compare this with (Rev 20 v 4). Are they not spoken of as living and reigning with our Lord while all others remain dead? This is the **FIRST** resurrection, and the second death has no power over them.

Well you may say, that is fine, but you are just picking and choosing your terms. You take the first resurrection as spiritual and the second as physical. How do you justify mixing the two? I don't, but John does and he does so in his gospel (John 5 v 24 - 29),

" Verily, verily I say unto you that he who hears my word, and believes Him that sent me, HAS LIFE ETERNAL, AND does not come into judgement, but IS passed out of death into life. Verily, verily I say unto you, that an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live..... Wonder not at this, for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall go forth; those that have practised good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement".

Here we have firstly, the soul being raised from the dead, in the midst of life, a spiritual

resurrection (vv 24 - 25). The SECOND is the resurrection from the tomb (vv 28 - 29).

Just what we consider the second death to be, depends then on our concept of the first resurrection. Men in Christ are raised from the dead, men out of Christ are dead already and can only die in a physical sense. The second death, by our exposition, is I think the eternal death (Rev 20 v 14) and the final separation from God. Those from Smyrna are therefore eternally secure if they overcome.

If our exposition of (Rev 20) is correct, we have the awful prospect of a final surge of evil, when satan is loosed (Rev 20 v 7). This must lead us to consider that we live in an age where evil is in some measure restrained, and this should cause us to consider the harmony of (2 Thess 2 v 1 - 2 with Rev 20 v 7 - 10) and further confirms our view of the concepts of resurrection.

We live in the time of satan's binding (Rev 20 v 1 - 3). Jesus revealed in (Mat 12 v 22-29) His power over satan which was like the binding of a strong man before spoiling his house, although the devil is at present a "roaring lion" (1 Pet 5 v 9) whom you can resist. Will you resist him in his various disguises? Resist the devil and he will flee (James 4 v 7). The Saints in Smyrna, I believe, would not have given up in prison (Rev 2 v 10) they would have gone on resisting.

WARNING: Faith that is not prepared to undertake a martyrs death is not true faith.

CHAPTER 6. (Revelation 2 v 12 - 17)

PERGAMOS

Pergamos like Ephesus had doctrine in some measure but also problems. It is as we observed elsewhere possible to hold sound teachings and practical error. Perhaps I should say that they tolerated error and falsehood in their midst. Here is a proverb (Prov 25 v 26) "A troubled fountain, and a defiled well is a righteous man that gives way before the wicked". Do you know, I have seen Christians put up tremendous fights against Christians in matters of doctrine, yet I have seen those self same people wilt before unbelievers. They do not want to upset the unbelievers, but it is alright to upset the Christians, after all they will forgive you.

Let us ask ourselves, what are the bounds of tolerance that we should have? Tolerance is derived from the latin (Tolerare, meaning to endure). In biological terms it expressed the ability to resist certain poisons. In engineering it is in effect an allowable inaccuracy.

There are various reasons for tolerances in mechanics:

- 1) To enable batch production.
- 2) To sustain operational stress (expansion).
- 3) To provide consistent results.

I recently replaced the wheel bearing on my car, because the part had exceeded its tolerance and failed.

Now, in matters of religion, what room do we allow for manoeuvre or tolerance? Firstly we

allow none for sin (Ps 5 v 4-6). There is nothing to be admired or excused in sinning (Ps 26 v 5-9). It is altogether to be hated (Prov 8 v 13). I am not saying that we can always avoid sin or its consequence. Perhaps by excommunication but we have a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5 v 18-21), which is the biblical approach of dealing with the question of sin. That does not mean that we will let it dwell and fester in our midst, because we have developed tolerance based upon the thought that in living in a sinful world we can never utterly defeat it. To the contrary, it is our duty to wage war against sin and most particularly where the people of God are (Eph 6 v 10 ff.) Sin must be recognised, brought into the open and dealt with. Not condoned, tolerated, or hidden. Persistence in error requires the sanction of the church for separation (Titus 3 v 10, 1 Tim 1 v 19, 1 Cor 5 v 5).

Of course, we may expand this concept of tolerance to the larger sphere of world government. What freedoms do we allow? Do we tolerate false religions or factions? These matters were given much thought in the reign of the Tudors (Henry and Elizabeth). The "catholic question" under Elizabeth was handled in a compromising manner. Catholics were allowed, in the early days, to retain an undisturbed private religious practice. They came under a much closer scrutiny, when Rome gave an edict that excommunicated the Queen and absolved her subjects from their oath of allegiance. Catholics were tolerated if their political allegiance was secure.

The rights of the monarchy to impose upon the freedoms of individuals became an issue in the time of the Puritans, particularly for William Perkins. One law, enforcing uniformity demanded that preachers wore vestments. The Puritans regarded this as "a matter of indifference", that is an issue without scripture rule. Tolerance was to them, a matter of liberty when it came to the exercise of certain practices not clearly defined in scripture. It was not a question of sin (1 Cor 10 v 23). There are also degrees of tolerance when it comes to matters of conscience, since we take into account the strength of faith in individuals (Rom 14 v 1 ff). So then, the State has no more ground than the local church for tolerating sin, but also it has no right to impose rules upon the individual that are contrary to God's word. Common laws, (i.e. driving on the right hand or left hand side) are agreed conventions, which I take as operating out of the rule of loving your neighbour as yourself.

I think that as a fellowship, we must re-examine ourselves to see if we have too large a tolerance. Are we giving ourselves more freedom than the Bible allows? We have been warned once this year of using or rather abusing our freedoms. Is this indicative of our attitude in other areas? Are we condoning sin? Are we becoming desensitised to the exceeding sinfulness of sin, are we running to the same sink of corruption? What does Peter say in warning (2 Pet 2 v 18-22).

If we are not of the world, our own behaviour must show it and not give cause to offend and stumble, and certainly not lead others into error. We may have more in common with Pergamos than any other of these churches! It is perhaps time to close ranks, tighten our personal discipline and re-evaluate our position.

Pergamos held sound views of Christ (Rev 2 v 13) even in the midst of a satanic city, renowned for learning (it had a massive library), and a shrine of healing (AESCULAPIUS). Somehow satan had a foothold in the church by bringing in an old heresy, derived from Balaam, a similar doctrine to that of the Nicolaitanes. In verse 15, "also" (Gk kai = and) refers back to the sons of

Israel. In other words, "who taught Balaak to cast a snare before the sons of Israel to eat idol sacrifices and commit fornication, as you also, likewise you hold to the Nicolaitane doctrine". This shows us that the essence of Nicolaitanism as being a religion condoning fornication.

How did this come about so quickly after the council of Jerusalem (Act 15 v 14-21)? It may have easily started from the position of freedom and eating with sinners. The strong in faith may have considered themselves above reproach and above falling into the snare of satan. The gratification of the flesh will soon take place if we put ourselves in the way of sinners (Ps 1 v 1). If we do not form the world's opinions, be sure it is not long before they form ours! We lapse into their shallow thinking and adopt as normal their ways and feasts. As one old preacher put it, it was not the problem of getting the people out of Egypt, it was getting Egypt out of the people.

To the people who are prepared to face up to the problems in their lives and sort out those problems, they are promised hidden manna. In Exodus (Ch 16) the children of Israel did not exercise that full trust in the Lord to support their needs. He certainly could deliver, but would he sustain? They reflected upon Egypt and supposed themselves better off there (Ex 16 v 3 ff). The food of idols was for them better than death.

There once was a dear old Saint who looked around upon the blessings of this life and exclaimed, "all of this and heaven too". This attitude might lead us into ways that hope to cream off the pleasures of the world and the joys of heaven and claim it as Christianity. The manna was, however, promised to those who fought to **overcome** not for those who capitulated. It was promised to those who overcame in their lives and in the church. Are we overcomers or are we overcome? Think carefully where you stand.

WARNING: Christ will fight AGAINST the church tolerating error.

CHAPTER 7. (Revelation 2 v 18 - 29)

THYATYRA

A city famed for its dyeing in particular and from whence we find Lydia, the saleswoman (Act 16 v 14), and who knows what part she played in their early growth? Unlike Ephesus we find that this church is commended for her work (Rev 2 v 19) for she is, as far as that matter is concerned, an improving church. We observe here, however, as with Pergamos, problems. It is possible to have good works and yet tolerate error. In Pergamos, they had doctrine but tolerated error.

Some Christians are full of good works and they will do anything you ask, yet they will also tolerate many things that are ungodly, shown by their silence. If you learn anything from Pergamos and Thyatira, please learn that it is essential to denounce evil, particularly when it is clearly impinging upon the souls of the faithful.

The logical outcome of such toleration is schism and the formation of weird sects. I read the

other week in a newspaper that some girls were indicted for prostitution, claiming to be "hookers (prostitutes) for Christ". They belonged, I think, to the "Children of God" (Moses David). Somehow they considered it part of their religious duties for fund raising and had not seen that it was contradictory to Christian principles. Weird ideas grow in people's minds, like mushrooms in the dark, unchallenged by the light of God's word.

It is not clear that the woman Jezebel is part of the church, and she may well have taught from outside, in opposition to the church. Now, do we really make issues where God's people are concerned, wherever the attack of Satan comes from, or do we merely confine it to our own closed circle? Do we wait for others, say, Apostles or Pastors to undertake what is clearly our duty (1 Cor 5 v 1 - 5)? We must not confuse autonomy, and the right to self government under God, with privacy from intrusion. No church is independent and no church can claim to be independent of any other without undermining the teaching of the Bible. Where ever God's people are being led astray, we must intrude. Is this not the principle contained in Ezekiel (33 v 1 - 6)?

The image presented to us of Jezebel draws us back to the O.T. (1 Kings 18 v 3 ff), where we learn of her intent to suppress the word of God. After Elijah's conflict with the prophets of Baal, he too flees from her wrath (1 Kings 19 v 1 ff). After the infamy of Jezebel against Naboth over the matter of the vineyard (1 Kings 21), the prophet of God returns to pronounce judgement (1 Kings 21 v 17 ff) and in due course this is executed (2 Kings 9 v 30 ff). Jezebel urged Ahab towards evil (1 Kings 21 v 25 - 26) and she is punished.

Her principal dogma according to (Rev 2 v 20) is like that of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, namely that of fornication and idolatry. We might suppose that these things are far from the heart of Christians, but our studies from the N.T. lead us to believe that they are common failings. Fornication and idolatry are outward and extreme signs of an inward failure. That inward failure, I would classify, is unwillingness to find satisfaction within the guidelines laid down by God. Need we cite again the case of Saul (1 Sam 15 v 22 ff). Such dissatisfaction issues in disloyalty (Ezek 16 v 44 ff).

Where better do we see dissatisfaction than in the heart of Ahab, concerning Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21 v 4 ff)? Where better do we see the work of this world's Jezebels than encouraging the dreams of such persons into reality (v 7)? The proverbs show us that some things are never satisfied and like the leeches two daughters they cry "Give, give" (Prov 30 v 15-16). Hell is forever open, consuming sinners, and so are men's eyes ever consuming the things that they see (Prov 27 v 20). We are by nature insatiable creatures, but in Christ we learn to put the brakes upon our appetites (Heb 13 v 5, Phil 4 v 11, 1 Tim 6 v 8). I take it that wealth is the by-product of the Christian life, not the goal.

Another symptom of dissatisfaction is the unwillingness to rectify or approach the problems of life. Our society knows too well that this is very hard and so it encourages the easy way out. You are dissatisfied at being pregnant - then fine, abort! Your marriage is unsatisfactory - then, divorce! Your kids are disobedient - then hand them over to the social worker. You are offended - then call in the police.

Many of the institutions that we have invented in our society exist in part to remove

dissatisfaction by transferring responsibility. They create dependency, then control and then slavery to their system. Ahab is dissatisfied, alright says Jezebel, I will take over (1 Kings 21 v 7-10), I will take the responsibility and grant you the satisfaction you crave.

Two things we therefore can associate with idolatry:

- 1) Dissatisfaction, particularly with God's way of action
- 2) The surrender of personal responsibility.

It may have been because of this that Thyatira was easy prey to the false prophetess Jezebel.

Now I find in our passage a paradox. The church is chided for its lack of action (Rev 2 v 20), yet the woman was given time to repent, (Rev 2 v 21). If it was not the church who approached her, who was it? Who called her to repentance? Well, yes, it implies the Lord (v 21), but I would suggest that it was through the hands of a prophet (or rather through the mouth). We see this as a common biblical pattern rather than direct revelation (see Jonah 1 v 1, Jonah 3 v 1 ff).

It must indeed be a sad thing to have a prophet come into an area that you are supposed to be working in, to do the things that you should be doing. It would appear that Thyatira now had nothing to do, for Jezebel is under judgement, so why mention it? If God's judgement was coming and no duty was imposed why write about it? I think it is to warn us of **our** duties that **we** might be complete not only in works and doctrine but in confrontation with the powers of darkness. This is spiritual warfare and we shall see more of this later on in Revelation (19 v 11 ff).

In closing we may note two further points.

- 1) The Lord is gracious not to overburden you and I (Rev 2 v 24). However, let us not abuse this grace by slackness and complacency.
- 2) If we exercise endurance and show ourselves worthy, we shall attain yet greater authority (Rev 2 v 26).

WARNING: Immorality in the churches will bring sickness and death.

CHAPTER 8. (Revelation 3 v 1 - 6)

SARDIS

I wish to start by an illustration of verse 3 on the theme of Watching. One of the important points that we must see about watching is that we must watch in the right direction and in the right way! It is perhaps a reason that we are often disappointed in life by our prayers not being answered according to our expectations, because we do not look in the way or direction of God's plans and answers.

The principal organ of watching is the eye. Because it is limited in its scope, mankind has

ingeniously supplemented it with various devices in order to improve the vision. Let us look at some and draw some spiritual parallels.

Binoculars and Telescopes. These devices enable man to look far ahead by collecting and focusing light upon the retina that would otherwise have failed to give an image. You may recall the recent German submarine film (Das Boot) where the members of the watch stood back to back on the conning tower, scanning sea and air for advance warning of attack. Watching enables one to take early action against the enemy!

The bible that I use was translated by JND (Darby). The "N" in his name stands for Nelson and I gather that he was the godson of the famous Admiral who was killed on Hardy's ship Victory at Trafalgar. During 1794 whilst taking Calvi on Corsica, Nelson was injured in his right eye and though it healed, he lost his sight in it. During the battle of Copenhagen in 1801 (A year after Darby's birth) he was signalled by his commander, Sir Hyde Parker to withdraw. Sensing victory, however, he placed his telescope to his blind eye and saw no signal. Hence the expression turning a blind eye.

Prophecy and God's word are a telescope for the believer (Heb 2 v 1 ff, 2 Peter 1 v 19 ff). Advance warning from the word of God stands us in good stead against the day of distress (Mat 24 v 15 ff). You cannot turn a blind eye to God's word and gain a victory.

Microscope. We may look to the distance (Telos) and we may look closely at the small things (Micros). Many advances in medicine have come by looking closely at biological process, thereby seeing the invisible enemies of mankind. Sometimes we do not like to look closely at ourselves because we see our nature in conflict with the righteousness of God. In Leviticus chapter 13 we see the Priest engaged in a close examination for leprosy, that disease associated with pride, that has very small beginnings. How much of man's illness both physical and spiritual start from tiny beginnings. God would have us examine ourselves in detail.

Mirrors. I am involved from time to time in corrosion investigation and you cannot beat the eye as a tool for evaluation. Second to the eye is a mirror. This helps you to look underneath and behind areas that are difficult to see. The dentist also looks for tooth corrosion using a similar tool. Far too often we take care of that which is easily seen and neglect that which isn't (Mat 23 v 25 ff, Mat 15 v 1-20).

One variation of mirrors is a periscope (also prismatic) which allows one vision without being seen. The art of seeing discretely.

In the 15th century at Nuremburg, it is thought, the first "Watch" was invented. The difference between a watch and a clock was originally that clocks would only run vertically. The watch is so called because it marks the watches or divisions of time. Most of us have wrist watches with which we observe the passing of time. In some areas we are good at making observations (Mat 16 v 1), but seldom do we see spiritual truths with the same clarity. Thus we must learn to watch with spiritual discernment as well as temporal discernment.

In Sardis people had lost sight of their purpose and values (Chap 2 v 3), and in consequence were a dead church. So often we are led to consider that a "live" church is an active church, a

known church ("have a name" Chap 3 v 1). Watching required concentration and purpose rather than running hither and thither. A live church is a watching church, a heeding church. In Matthew (Chap 26 v 41) Jesus asks the disciples to watch so that they entered not into temptation. They were not acting as lookouts to see who was coming into the garden, they were using their alertness to avoid the evils of temptation. Are we not more prone to temptation when we are tired, physically run down and ill, or worried and pre-occupied? There is in this the implication that we have a need to keep our physical well being so that we might be of health body to watch successfully for our own souls (1 Cor 16 v 13). We watch as men not as cripples.

Again I note that we watch with purpose (Col 4 v 2), particularly in prayer. Prayer is the stirring of the Spirit of God (Rom 8 v 26) in the soul of man. True prayer is the preparation by God for the reception of His benefits, and we are encouraged to watch over our prayers, not to pray lightly or vainly but with purpose. We can by this, in some measure discern the validity of our prayers by the answers that the Lord gives us. Recently a house was for sale near us, I heard that some of our previous noisy neighbours were interested in buying it and I was moved to pray against it. It's not that they were particularly nasty neighbours, they were just noisy and inconsiderate, which was one of the reasons we moved into a quieter area. I watched in that prayer. The noisy people finally put their bid in and in due course a "sold" notice appeared on the property, but I kept on praying. The sign went back to "under offer", and the deal eventually fell through. They did not get that property. As I saw that prayer get answered, I watched and I gave thanks to the Lord.

Whatever you may think of that prayer, I was personally moved in that way and I take it an illustration of (Col 4 v 2). How many set prayers end up as vain repetition with no moving of God's spirit in them and in consequence no answers? Do we learn any lessons in watching in this? This church, is full of people with dirty clothes (Rev 3 v 4). They have made a mess of things, they are unworthy, they are careless and scruffy inside and outside. They suffer one fate, they are blotted out.

WARNING: A watching church is a living church.

CHAPTER 9. (Revelation 3 v 7 - 13)

PHILADELPHIA

There is a common event that links the three towns of Philadelphia, Sardis and Laodicea, namely the earthquake in AD 17. There is also a common factor linking Sardis and Philadelphia, namely that they received no rebuke from the Lord in Revelation.

I like first to consider a key statement in Revelation (3 v 8), "you have a little strength". I do not take this to be a condemnation but an observation. From this statement we can formulate a question.

Is a faithful church a strong and powerful church? There is an idea prevalent among Christians that a church which is faithful (Rev 3 v 8) must grow:

- a) numerically and
- b) spiritually.

- 1) God builds His church (1 Cor 3 v 9) and adds to it (Acts 2 v 47). Evangelism is ordained by the Holy Spirit (Act 13 v 1 ff), not by man. As such, the work is the work of Christ and clearly, zeal does not override the purpose of God (Act 16 v 6 - 10). A faithful church does not necessarily see numerical growth and I challenge you to find where the bible teaches that it does.

A faithful church will become a spiritual church, for faith becomes practice (1 Cor 14 v 37, 1 John 3 v 24). Therefore, spirituality and numerical growth are not mutually inclusive.

2) Let us make another observation. Is a growing church a faithful and powerful church? There are of course different growth rates. It may be gradual and consolidated or rapid such that it outstrips all the resources and weakens the body like a plant germinating in the dark. Corinth was a growing church (Act 18 v 8), but it was also divided (1 Cor 1 v 10), and it was not faithful (1 Cor 5 v 1 ff). Churches may grow by their ability to compromise and synthesise in doctrine. They have a popular gospel. Perhaps Laodicea is of this type, for it has no problems or conflict in the world (Rev 3 v 17). They may have a type of impact but it does not in the end change the culture.

I would suggest that Philadelphia did not compromise and so found itself opposed, also for this reason it appeared to lack power. The conflict with evil will in history lead to dark ages, which see the church that is faithful making little or no impact in society. This is a fact of life.

What then might we say are the marks of the true churches that gain Christ's approval? Endurance (Rev 2 v 2), labour and works, willingness to suffer (Rev 2 v 10), steadfastness in the doctrine of Christ (Rev 2 v 13), and keeping the word (Rev 3 v 8).

To the church then at Philadelphia, Christ opens a door (Rev 3 v 8). Not as we might think for an escape route but as a reward for their good standing. In Isaiah (ch 22 v 22) we read about the key of the house of David. The days of distress are spoken about in 2 Kings Chapter 18 and during this time perhaps, a vision of encouragement is laid before the faithful.

What then is a key for? It is to secure property against its enemies. The kingdom is not open to anyone, neither does anyone have the power of legislation (Mat 16 v 19). A key is not merely to lock somebody out, it is to many the privilege of access. We should also note that there is one key and one key holder. The uniqueness of the system is therefore laid before us.

When we read Revelation 3 verse 20, we see that there is a door that the church controls just as here there is a door that Christ controls. A set of double doors. This reminded me of the tabernacle where there were in effect two doors. The outer door was the door (curtain) to the first tent (Heb 9 v 6), the door under man's control so to speak. The second door (Heb 9 v 7) was under God's control and entry was by permission and consent (Lev 10). We have access,

boldly through Christ (Heb 10 v 19). We might consider this in the light of how many churches have a form of worship (first tabernacle worship) which is in various ceremonies where Christ has no part but the fabric still functions. There is also a form of worship which embraces Christ and enters into a deeper form of spiritual worship (second tabernacle worship).

Now we have made some observations about this door but not fully ascertained its purpose here. There is no final statement that he who overcomes will be allowed to enter in through the door. Since the church is a believing church, they have in once sense entered that door of Christ (John 10 v 9). So what door might we here be contemplating? Perhaps the door of Revelation (4 v 1 ff). The door of knowledge concerning the things which are to come upon the earth. History as far as its details were concerned was often declared by the prophets. We shall since this door is open to us, be looking into the goal and course of history as declared by Jesus Christ.

Such revelations are not for the satisfaction of curiosity but the preparation of victory. This preparative aspect of prophecy is one that does not let us be shaken. The deliverance that was to be experienced by the Philadelphians was conditional (Rev 3 v 10). The coming trial was one that they would pass through. How could they escape it? Would God geographically remove them? Would the whole church get up and go? I would suggest that perhaps the form of deliverance was more mental, the ability to endure the pressures of the trial. In Luke (21 v 26) we see how men are beside themselves in times of trouble but no so the Saint (Luke 21 v 28). Why? Because we are kept by God's word and witness (Heb 12 v 1-3). We are people of sound mind in time of trouble (Phil 4 v 7).

The final victory of the Philadelphians means that they will no longer have a partial relationship with the Temple of God. They will be established permanently as pillars (Rev 3 v 12).

WARNING: The devil is after your crown.

CHAPTER 10. (Revelation 3 v 14 - 22)

LAODICEA

Laodicea was about 10 miles west of Colosse, the distance from our fellowship (in Bracknell) to Earley (Reading). The two fellowships were linked by the apostle's letters (Col 4 v 13 ff). It had no permanent water supply and so it was supplied from hot springs through square section carved stone pipes, which furred up. The luke-warm water arriving at the town has often been associated with the luke-warm attitude of the people (Rev 3 v 16). Of all the churches perhaps this is the best known or most quoted. The novelist Thomas Hardy even wrote a story called "The Laodicean".

The first point I would like to consider is the way God sees. I remember watching a film once called "The Man with X-ray Eyes". It was about a Doctor who discovered a concoction that when applied to his eyes enabled him to see through objects. Initially he could see through clothes, but as he became addicted, and used more, he began to see through the flesh. Eventually he lived in a world of skeletons, a very frightening world. Our vision is only over a

small range of the electromagnetic spectrum, but with appropriate detectors we can picture a different world altogether.

I believe that God views us in a peculiar spectrum, which we might call the "Moral Spectrum". Seen by God, the Laodiceans are naked, poor, blind, miserable and wretched. The Pharisees when looked at in "Moral Light" were different creatures (Mat 23 v 27 ff). In Noah's day, a day of seemingly outward normality (Mat 24 v 27 ff), was in the "Moral Light" of God totally corrupt (Gen 6 v 12).

Religious activities which come under this same piercing glance, although outwardly similar showed marked differences (Gen 4 v 3 ff). Christians today have forgotten this great fact of God's visionary power. John in his Gospel is at pains to remind us of this (John 3 v 19 ff). He gives us the method of evaluation whereby we examine the world about us as God does. It is a world not viewed in the visible spectrum, but in "The Moral Spectrum". He tells us that to evaluate works we must lay them bare before the lamp of God. Christ was and is that true light (John 1 v 9), the word of God incarnate.

The Laodiceans had departed from these criteria. This theme of light in Christ is opened up in the epistle to the Colossians (Ch 1 v 12 ff), the epistle also read by the Laodiceans (Col 4 v 16). Paul labours to get this understanding across (Col 2 v 1 ff). He exhorts them to shun worldly ordinances (Col 2 v 14 - 16), and to be enriched in the wisdom of God (Col 3 v 16). The message clearly did not go home. Will we make the same mistake?

Matters of religion had become matters of indifference (Rev 3 v 15 -16). Their lives had not been polarised by their relationship with Christ. They had not been swayed to any conclusions one way or the other. There is no middle ground with the Lord, so that people who will not make up their minds are cast with the enemies of Christ because God is not pleased with people who vacillate. In Elijah's day people of a similar mind existed (1 Kings 18 v 21). It is a form of laziness, although there are many who will call it the broad minded and tolerant approach. Christianity is intolerant! God has taken the trouble to make it plain in writing that He has made some very clear distinctions and if we do not conform by adopting those distinctions as matters of life and practice, what have we become? We are an emetic! We make God sick, we stick in His throat and He vomits us out, we are no longer part of his body.

What encourages decision making in Christ? It is an attitude of confidence in God's plan of action (Deut 5 v 32 - 33). It is single mindedness (James 1 v 8) based upon the fact that the objectives are quite clear in your mind. It is the willingness to perform those duties to obtain those ends. This positive attitude is one which should distinguish Christians from the rest of men who find that an attitude of indifference is a commendable and broad minded approach to life.

The famous words of this section are found in Revelation (ch 3 v 20). You may be familiar with the "Knock, knock jokes". "Knock, knock, who's there?" "Behold, I stand at the door!" Is it still a joke? Are we in a position with an open door to Christ or have we got an independent fellowship, **independent** of God?

This is a clear explanation of the attitude of the Laodiceans. They were independent of God and

independent of His value judgements and guidance. When you examine ecumenism, you find that it has no clearly defined doctrines. It is Laodicean. It is the unity of men and independence from the Historical, Biblical Jesus. How often, in an attempt at evangelical zeal do men abuse this text (Rev 3 v 20), and apply it to individuals. They say it to the unbeliever and exhort him to open the door of his heart. It is however, **the door of the church**, the door of those who say they are believers, that is being knocked upon. It is a strange paradox is it not, Christless churches, Christ on the outside but not on the inside? Yet all too apparent in this day and age.

WARNING: Lukewarm commitment makes God sick.

Let us close our look at the seven churches by making the following observations.

- 1) They exist at the same time in history. It is not a dispensational view of Christianity but a cross-sectional view of the geographical church.
- 2) In a small geographical location, the influence of the churches upon each other are not profound. They are in some sense isolated from the spiritual influences of one another. Influence is often very local.
- 3) Not all of the churches function in a way commendable by the Lord.
- 4) All churches are under the guidance and rebuke of Christ no matter how they perform. However, they do not all respond to this influence or take heed of it.
- 5) Churches have individuality and character. Character beyond the individuals.

CHAPTER 11. Revelation Chapter 4

THE THRONE

"After this I looked..... come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter" (Rev 4 v 1). Men's minds often daydream about the things of heaven, and to them the so called pearly gates and St. Peter are their primary visions. Others trust to see Mary mother of Jesus. John sees something entirely different. The vision of John is not dissimilar to that of Moses (Heb 8 v 3 - 5), and we shall see many ideas from the tabernacle of Exodus appearing again. This leads me to the idea that the early church needed familiarisation with the O.T., if it was to have any understanding of the elements presented to it here. I note that much of today's Christianity has very little understanding of the O.T. and it is hardly surprising therefore, that they fantasise upon the subjects that will present themselves to us.

Now, we observe the first object of the vision and it is the throne of God. Here is the focus of all that proceeds in the book. The **throne** of God. Let us endeavour to understand the significance. In Matthew (ch 5 v 34) Thronos (Θρονος) is the heaven itself, which is the seat of God Himself (Mat 22 v 22). One of the purposes of the throne is as a place of judgement (Mat 19 v 28, Mat 25 v 31). It is by this example, the place from which the Law, the absolute rule of

the universe issues. It is the place where mankind is assessed (Rev 20 v 11) and finally condemned or vindicated. Hence in absolute terms it is the final arbiter of all human action.

The throne is not merely the place of reckoning. It is also a place of government (Luke 1 v 32, Luke 1 v 52). In previous cultures a special chair was adapted for this purpose and we should remember that in older days domestic chairs did not exist as regular items of furniture. People generally reclined at tables or upon a carpet. The throne elevated the King and thus gave him a clear view of his subjects and put them in view of him. The Hebrew (Cisse כִּסֵּי) probably comes from a root meaning to cover since the throne had a canopy spread over it. In (Gen 41 v 40), Joseph although elevated to a position of great authority did not have absolute rule in Egypt. Pharaoh had the power.

A great controversy came to a head in the 17th Century concerning the "Divine Right of Kings". Broadly speaking, the Royalists claimed that the throne derived its power and authority directly from God whereas the Parliamentarians claimed that this power was the outcome of a contract between the sovereign and the people. The Biblical position concerning government appears to put the throne of the king below that of God and subject to God (Deut 17 v 4). This limits the power of both the king and the people to rule not by democratic or dictatorial process, but by the word of God, Theocracy. It also asks that both parties exercise respect for one another (Deut 17 v 20, Rom 13 v 1). The real question at issue in the time of the Civil war was not who rules, but what constituted rule? It unfortunately became too personalised.

So we have observed the throne as:

- 1) The place of dwelling
- 2) The place of judging
- 3) The place of ruling

It is before this great throne that we see the elders, and we have not yet fully defined who they are. They cast their crowns before Him who reigns in his own right (Rev 4 v 10 - 11), and this is a significant event, for it clearly answers our controversies concerning "Church", and "State", of which we have spoken before. There is in this act, the submission to the rule of God, it does not matter what you call a particular organisation of men (i.e. State, Parliament, Church, Tribe, Nation etc). They are all duty bound to fall before **THE** authority of God, yes, they are duty bound to uphold it! At the resurrection, Christ ascended to the throne of David (Acts 2 v 30).

This asserts that the mission of Christ was not merely redemptive and ecclesiastical. It had profound civil implications. It was not merely an act of the Church, but an act of universal significance. Paul in 1 Corinthians (15 v 20) picks up this theme. He pictures Christ exercising the authority of God not merely redeeming sinful men, but annulling all the powers that are at present resisting Him.

The O.T. shows that Israel (1 Sam 8 v 7) and the world rejected God as King and Lord. Jesus undertakes to bring all things back under the rule of God whence He shall deliver the throne back to the Father (1Cor 15 v 24). Hence the O.T. Theocracy becomes the N.T. Christocracy.

So important is this idea of 'throne' and so central to the understanding of Revelation that we

see that it occurs more times in Revelation than in the whole of the rest of the N.T. Only in chapters 9, 10, and 15 is it not mentioned. In chapter 2 (v 13) we saw satan's throne among men. It is about the battle of these two thrones that Revelation is concerned, the long war against God!

It is important that Christians become quite clear in their minds about the absolute authority of God's throne. The word of man cannot in any circumstances appeal to its own authority or gain credibility by invoking truth, swearing "in the name of God" (Mat 5 v 33 ff). For this reason God makes his throne inviolable, because it is the command centre of the universe and as such is not subservient to the word of man.

For this reason also it is the prime focus of satan's attack. In human terms all command centres for military purposes are well fortified. If the command centre falls, then communication, coherence, and direction are lost. In the beginning (Gen 3 v 1 ff), satan attacked not only God's word, he attacked His Throne and he encouraged man to become master of his own destiny and to set up a throne apart from God. He could, so he was told, know good and evil, that is, exercise judgements apart from God.

John takes us right to the principle of sound actions, and that is, that they must all be sanctioned from the throne of God. For this reason Paul shows us that as God's co-workers, we are involved in this struggle against alien authority (Ephesians 6 v 12).

The whole imagery of Revelation 4 is directed to show us the magnificence, omnipotence and omniscience of this throne. It is a great comfort to behold with John the true state of affairs in the universe, even though, with human reason we might think that the cosmos is mad and wildly out of control. It is not however, a wild beast running according to its own will, but a place where all events are seen and driven towards the final act of submission to God, here again at **the throne**.

CHAPTER 12. Revelation 4

Central to the vision of heaven was the throne from which all that is, proceeds. Around this throne are the 24 Presbyters, and there has been much speculation as to who they might be, and what is the symbolism of the number ($24 = 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 12 \times 2$ etc). Some consider that they are the combined rule of the 12 Father's of Israel and the 12 Apostles. In Matthew (19 v 28), we are told that the Apostles will sit upon 12 thrones judging the 12 Tribes. This does not preclude the involvement of another 12, the 12 O.T. Fathers, but against that idea I would suggest that the 12 Fathers were not equally represented in the constitution of Israel (Numbers 16 v 1 - 5).

The test of who was worthy to be in the immediate presence of God fell to the tribe of Levi (Numbers 16 v 7 - 11, cf verse 28, ff). This event was further backed up by the events in the following chapter (Numbers 17), which singles out Levi for special privileges. We should not forget that in Revelation chapter 4, we are looking upon the reality from which issues the O.T. types (Heb 8 v 5, Ex 25 v 8 - 9), and I am suggesting that the worship of Israel, which centred in

the priestly tribe, was founded upon the heavenly vision (just as it is now).

The fact that the 12 Apostles sit upon 12 thrones does not imply that they are the same thrones as those in Revelation chapter 4. Indeed, did Judas "one of the 12" have a throne and is there any limit to the number of thrones? Perhaps all that Matthew (19 v 28) asserts is that the judgement of Israel will be according to the Gospel (Romans 1 v 16 - 18). The idea of 12 O.T. plus 12 N.T. Patriarchs is rank dispensationalism, for there is only one Church in all ages, not two fused together at the cross.

Now, I am loath to interpret scripture without reference to scripture, so I will not speculate as to who the 24 Elders are. We do though see two clear functions in Revelation (4 v 10). Firstly of worship and secondly rule. Passing back into the O.T. in 1 Chronicles (28 v 11 ff), we observe that David was given a similar vision of the heavens and in addition, he gives us a new vision of worship much enlarged from the vision of Moses. As part of that worship we again see Levi, now enlarged numerically, occupying a central position in the Sanctuary. In 1 Chronicles (chapter 24) we now see a division of worship, headed up by 24 courses of Priests. These men are also described as Princes of God (1 Chron 24 v 5). Here we find then, our significance for the number 24. From this I would suggest that the 24 Elders from Revelation represent the corporate structure of Church government and worship.

Creation, as we saw in Proverbs (3 v 19) was devised by God's wisdom and it is ruled ultimately through a redeemed body of men, the Church. The Church is not subject to the rule of sinful men and neither should it flee to sinners for advice or rule (1 Cor 6 v 1 ff). Christianity is not a second class body, meekly hanging on in a sinful world, rather it is the guiding light and ruling body! In Revelation we see this fact displayed before the throne of God.

We have studied the Cherubim in detail (**see Appendix 1**), and I will pass over them (Rev 4 v 7 - 9) by merely reiterating that we consider them as being the Divine power and omniscience of God in creation and redemption. A symbolic picture if you will, of God at work in His creation, governing, sustaining, judging, purifying, and encouraging, consequently it will all reflect the holiness of God, even though much of creation appears in revolt. Clearly, creation is groaning under the folly of man, much preferring the day when God will bring back His perfect rule (see Romans 8 v 20 ff). Creation at rest with its Creator is described in Isaiah (11 v 1 ff), at peace with itself and in harmony with man.

The chapter closes with a statement that answers the reason for the way things are in this world. It is for the good pleasure of God (John 9 v 3, Exodus 4 v 11, 1 Peter 2 v 8), and such examples show that man has no say in his condition. Mankind is a component in a grand design as yet not fully revealed and he cannot alter the plan of God one bit, just as he cannot by thinking about it change his own design by mind over matter, just as he cannot change his hair colour (Mat 5 v 36) or change his height (Mat 6 v 27). This passage informs us that such things are bound up in the providence of God, not the will or wishful thinking of man. Rather than concern ourselves with the alteration of providence, we are asked to submit to it (Mat 6 v 31), knowing that God has this area well under control.

Mankinds' duty within the boundaries of providential government, is to avail himself of the moral virtues of the kingdom, so for this reason we see that prayer does not give God any

new information about what we need (Mat 6 v 8). Far from asking the Lord to feed us, "**The Model Prayer**" puts the petitioner in mind of his needs **not** his wants (see Luke 11 v 3). It is by this token, a cry that God's providence both limit and content him, similar to Proverbs (ch 30 v 8 - 9). We might well consider this prayer as a confession of Christian intent and the echo of a heart conformed to providence.

This verse (Rev 4 v 11) sets the stage for the next scene which shows the scroll of God (Biblos), with its seven seals. Not only is the plan designed by God, none but God is worthy to open it up so it is in a sense a legacy or will handed down to the Son. Having proved Himself the good and faithful servant, He has the full executive power of God (1 Cor 15 v 20 ff).

We must observe in the following chapters that all events are governed by the release by the things contained in this scroll. It matters not what designs satan or his unregenerate confederates have, they are all blown aside in the face of the great power that is to be released upon the earth.

CHAPTER 13. Revelation 5

Our vision now leads us to see a book, or more properly a scroll (Βιβλος Biblos) which has been written upon both sides. We read in Luke (chapter 4 v 17 see v 20) how Jesus expounds the Law from a scroll of the prophet Isaiah and rolls it up again. In Revelation (6 v 14) the description of the Day of the Wrath of the Lord, the Heavens are rolled up as a scroll (Biblos). Our concept of a book, is clearly different to that of Jesus day. In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet is commanded to eat a double sided scroll which contains lamentations and woe (Ezek 2 v 9 - 3 v 4) which is not dissimilar to the contents of the scroll in Revelation.

Why then is the scroll in Revelation sealed? You may recall when we studied Jeremiah that he sealed a document of purchase for the field of Hanameel (Jeremiah 32 v 10 ff). One document could be commonly read the other would be sealed to guard against any alteration, in other words it acted as a tally. I do not think however, that Revelation is sealed to guard it against tampering.

As the scroll of Revelation was written on both sides, we might suppose that at least part of it was readable. Not so however, (Revelation 5 v 3 - 4) and this is a clue to the nature of the seal. God seals things not with mere red wax, but with a peculiar power of confusion (Isaiah 29 v 9 - 13). The same thing happens at the end of the book of the prophet Daniel (12 v 4). This idea is further confirmed by the events that occur when the seals are opened (Rev 6 v 1). We are not told that the events are triggered into action, rather that they are now visible. The person who made these visible was the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev 5 v 5 - 7). It was not asked who was strong enough or powerful enough to open the seals, rather it was a question of **worthiness**, and that stemmed from the fact that Christ had conquered.

This must lead us again to consider the subject of history. Some have suggested that historical literature is in reality a criticism or judgement of life, an attempt to formulate and relate the events that happen. It is an attempted explanation of providence if you will. Now

what we have here is the fact that the true order and meaning of events can only be interpreted by Christ. Because of this fact, I am sure that in glory we shall see how distorted unregenerate man's view of life really was.

Now as I have suggested, the opening of the seals reveals a particular order of events. The things that we see have **already** functioned and existed. For example the horsemen are seen in Zechariah (1 v 11), hence the church is privileged to see the Divine order of certain events.

Before I look at these events, I want us to bear in mind that this book of Revelation, as indeed all of the books of the bible, is written for the common believing man. "Common" (Koine) Greek, the language of the common man, was used to convey the N.T. scripture to all men. It is not a book that requires a vast intellect to grasp its meaning. The thoughts are indeed profound as Peter says (2 Pet 3 v 15 - 18), and they require care in exposition. It is of interest as Peter observed, that those who are unstable will wrestle with scripture to their own destruction. I am comforted by this remark, that a stable or consistent approach is the way to get the best from scripture. It is interesting that when people come to prophecy they begin to stagger and lurch about inventing all manner of strange happenings to explain the words. It is as if prophecy requires a totally different approach to get its meaning, than that which is used to understand the Law, the Proverbs, the Psalms or the Gospels. It seems to ask for a new set of rules.

Now we must remember that these words are written to ordinary Christians who did not have the benefit of vast libraries, lexicons, commentaries, dictionaries, systematic theologies, maps or even their own personal copy of a bible to study! I do not think that they would have looked for complicated explanations, indeed they may well have expected a very simple and direct statement from the scripture.

There is a remarkable parallel between the events in Revelation (chapter 6) and the 24th chapter of Matthew's gospel. We have studied this chapter before and I have nothing new to add to that, I merely point out that the order of events (Matt 24 v 6) Wars, (Matt 24 v 7) famine and pestilence and death, (Matt 24 v 9) the affliction of the Saints, (Matt 24 v 14) the end are in fact the order in the book of Revelation chapter 6.

The sequence of the seals is then, the Divine order which leads up to the end of the world. The fact that Christians die in martyrdom is secondary to the overall outworking of the four horsemen's terrible duties. God does not immediately execute vengeance upon people who have killed His children (Rev 6 v 10 - 11), but waits until His great plan is complete.

So then, let us summarise Revelation 5. We have the vision of the throne and one who sits in the throne with a sealed scroll. The challenge issued as to who is worthy to open it, is taken up by none except the Christ. Christ then commences the work of unfolding to the church, a sequence which is already operative in creation. The order of events that proceed from the opening of the seals is not strictly or necessarily a temporal sequence. Martyrs cried out from beneath the altar from the earliest times (Gen 4 v 10). We might consider that the order of the seals is also one of moral priorities.

The seals act as a covering so that not all men can look into the words.

If you look at the outline of the book of Revelation (see structure 2), you will see that the seven seals lead into details of the final judgement upon the earth. Before we look at these let us go into more details on the two chapters 5 and 6.

CHAPTER 14. Revelation Chapter 5

THE CHALLENGE

There is a challenge in verse 2 which is issued to all mankind, "who is worthy?" Since it appears that none were worthy to do this task, how can a sinful man do the greater task of redemption, either for himself or for others? Indeed, from this passage it is clear (Rev 5 v 6 - 9), that the worthiness came out of the ability to redeem mankind. It is proof that no man is capable of saving another and that we should not put our trust in men (Act 4 v 12), therefore, do not trust men in matters of salvation!

There is in this passage before us much that is found in the book of Daniel (chapter 7). The vision of Daniel occurs in the first year of Belshazzar whom you will recall blasphemed the holy vessels at his party and at the same night lost his kingdom (Daniel 5 v 1), to him also was the word of God sealed (please read Daniel 7 v 1 - 28).

We read of four kingdoms and then the kingdom of the Saints (Daniel 7 v 22). It is similar to the vision given to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2 v 31 ff), relating to the golden headed statue. Daniel (2 v 44) shows us the arrival of a 5th monarchy or Kingdom of God's people which destroys the other kingdoms and stands forever. In Daniel (7 v 9) we see the thrones set as in Revelation (4 v 4). The throne of the ancient of days issued fire (Dan 7 v 9, Rev 4 v 10). Myriads ministered before Him (Dan 7 v 10, Rev 5 v 11). The Son of Man approaches (Dan 7 v 13, Rev 5 v 6 - 7), and receives dominion and glory (Dan 7 v 14, Rev 5 v 12 - 13).

Now is Daniel watching the last judgement or is he watching the start of Christ's dominion with power? In Daniel 7 (v 9 - 11) what is the span of time? Are verses 13 - 14 consecutive or totally isolated from the preceding verses? Notice also that there is a difference between Christ inheriting a kingdom (i.e. being given authority) and being given the actual full possession (i.e. establishing) of that kingdom (compare 1 Cor 15 v 24 with Daniel 7 v 14 and 22).

From Daniel (2 v 34, 40), we see that the 4th kingdom is primarily attacked by Christ. So, in Daniel 7 we see the conflict occurring with the 4th king (v 19) during his reign. During this reign the people of God are persecuted. (Compare Daniel 7 vv 21 - 25 with Rev 6 vv 9 - 10). It is also at this time that the Saints progress to the final victory.

There is in the creation a working out of sin to its inevitable end, death (Rom 6 v 23). Providence will accomplish that end without the intervention of the Son of God. The kingdoms of the earth seen by Daniel deteriorate from golden heads to feet of clay! Fish rot

from the head. The scroll contains the history of this inevitable decline. Integration into the void. Who is worthy to alter this downward spiral? Who can redeem history?

This challenge that we considered at the start of our ministry has been heard by the world. Mankind's sole aim as a community is to redeem itself from the collapsing society that it foresees, if it is not given the authority to act. Man thinks that he is worthy to take the scroll, indeed this is the aim of all political and religious dogmas. Marx's continual preoccupation with capital, wealth and labour, led him to view history in a peculiar way. He saw the direction of the formative process, that is history, as an expression of class warfare (Marx, select works by Engels, p 95). Marx's evolutionary view of history saw mankind as different from the animals in that they "make history themselves" (ibid p 349). Why this should be is not stated categorically, although it is implied that man plans better than the animal and is better organised (incidentally, do not forget that God said the opposite about one of the smallest creatures, the ant (Prov 6 v 6), that it is better organised than some men, and a good example to all men). However, Marx had the bit clearly between his teeth and was ready to make his own rules as to the meaning of history (ibid p 410). We must see that in his mind, history determines the priority of all other spheres, which is a radical contradiction of Christian philosophy (see appendix 2). You may think that this is too intellectual, and irrelevant to Christianity, but it is not, it shows us how we can fight the false philosophies by striking at their heart.

Marx's views on "The materialistic conception of history" (ibid p 411) shows how he proposed that history would be changed by economics. This is little difference from 'Thatcherism' or 'Reaganomics' (this ministry was given on the 28th April 1985) and it is the sinful approach to redemption.

We see that the documents of history and the power to control it, and change it, are firmly in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev 5). This is also a message contained in the Psalms (Ps 2 ff & Ps 110).

Just as the scroll of Jeremiah held the title to the possession of his property, so does this scroll hand all power to Christ. The right of redemption (Ruth 4 v 6 ff) was a principle in Israel and I am sure that it carried with it written statements. Such redeeming affected three areas:

- 1) Lev 25 v 24 - 28, The forfeited heritage.
- 2) Lev 25 v 47 - 54, Bondage.
- 3) Numbers 35 v 12 - 19, The avenger of death.

Small wonder that this new horizon causes the elders and angels to sing a "new song" (Rev 5 v 9). The scene parallels the Exodus from Egypt where the first song of scripture is sung (Ex 5 v 1). For Israel the progress of history had led them inevitably into a corner and apparent destruction, shut up with no way out. In this situation, God intervenes and changes the apparent course of events by a mighty miracle. This foreshadows Christ doing the same things, changing history's seeming inevitabilities by His own worthiness. And above all that, He has seen fit to comfort us by revealing His purpose to us today.

THE FOUR HORSEMEN.

These four horsemen of Revelation (the proverbial "four horsemen of the Apocalypse") are familiar figures from the O.T. and so there is nothing to indicate that they are released into creation in the last days. They already exist and are going up and down the earth! In Zechariah (chapter 6 v 1 - 8) they are hitched to chariots. They are the four winds of heaven (v5) which blow over the whole earth and as such they satisfy the angel of God although they are not always present in the same location at the same time. To what extent the Saints of the O.T. understood their purpose is not made clear.

THE WHITE HORSE.

In Revelation, we view them in more detail. The white horse, we saw in Zechariah, followed the black horse. The white horse also appears in Revelation (19 v 11 ff) and as such is the steed of Christ, who subdues the nations by His word. The colour white is indicative of righteousness (Rev 19 v 8). I would suggest that the nature of this conquering is particularly spiritual (Eph 6 v 12) in opposition to the temporal conquering of the red horse.

THE RED HORSE.

Red is the colour associated with sin (Is 1 v 18), however, it may also symbolise the bloodshed of war (Is 63 v 1 - 3). We should be careful in assuming that the colour here symbolises sin, because we might then conclude that war is sinful (there are just wars made by God)! The horseman functions by taking peace from the earth.

We often think of war as a means of establishing peace, but we would be wrong, war is the condition of the breakdown, or breaking down of peace. Peace is the condition in which men are brought into a righteous equilibrium with God (Rom 5 v 1) and it is spiritual rather than temporal in origin (Rom 8 v 6, Gal 5 v 22). The absolute cause of peace is "the blood of the cross" (Col 1 v 20). We can now see, therefore that peace comes not through war, but by reconciliation with God (Prov 16 v 17), "please God" and you will be at peace. If this red horse takes up peace from the earth, we may infer that it is because men cease to please God. In their own eyes men are fighting for their own form of peace, but not that which passes all understanding.

THE BLACK HORSE.

Black is the colour associated with spiritual ignorance (Psalm 107 v 10 - 11), but also we note with health. Black hairs in a sore indicated in some way, growing healthy tissue (Lev 13 v 31 - 37). In Song of Songs (5 v 11) it is the colour of a beautiful head of hair. What then applies to this horse?

In the riders hand is a yoke, which could signify a balance. The same word is used in the LXX (Septuagint Greek translation of the O.T.) in Proverbs (16 v 11) to indicate justice, and a false balance is not good (Prov 20 v 23). Ezekiel uses similar terms (chapter 45 v 9 - 11 LXX

version) as John in Revelation.

From the midst of the throne a voice comes (Rev 6 v 6) calling the measures, confirming the use of yoke in the sense of a balance for transactions. It has also been suggested that the rates of exchange are famine rations. A glance at 2 Kings (7 v 1) would suggest differently. In the midst of a famine, God had provided for His people, "hurt **not** the oil and the wine", that is, do not injure the trees which support life! This is a promise in the Psalms (33 v 18 - 19) and was clearly seen in Exodus. It throws a strange light over the Marxist view of economics that we discussed last time!

The view that the black horse bodes well for the people of God and is not a sign of famine is backed up by the vision of the final horseman who does have famine as his weapon.

THE PALE HORSE.

The black horse might therefore teach us that God maintains the health of His people (Acts 11 v 27), while the pale (Χλωρος Chloros = green, whence 'chlorine') rider that follows brings death in a more general form. His sword (Ρομφαία Romphaia cf Rev 19 v 15), is the broad sword as opposed to the short sword (μαχαίρα Makaira cf Rev 6 v 4) symbolises justice rather than war.

If I were to make a distinction between the red and the pale horse, it would be that death brought about by the red horse centres upon the attitude of the people to God Himself. Death by the pale horse is brought about by the attitude of the people to the law of God (see Deut 28 v 15).

There is a principle of death at work in society which operates in every sphere (the **sword** in the moral/historical sphere, **famine** in the economic/biological sphere, **beasts** in the moral/biological sphere). Death as such is not irrational, purposeless or meaningless. When we are confronted with death we do not always have the specific reason for its appearance. We often quite clearly see the effect, but relating the effect to the reason is not so easy.

For David the reason was clear *2Sa 24:12 Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee.* The causes had varying durations and intensities, but the final outcome was the same. Death! This story teaches us that we may suffer because of our leaders, so it is important to exercise constraints upon those who would rule over us, rather than let them get on with it (1 Tim 2 v 1 ff). Prayer implies that we also have some accompanying actions to perform, for we do not just pray for bread and stay at home. Christians can be "politically" active.

SUMMARY: The four horsemen follow the pattern of tribulation laid down in Matthew (24 v 6 ff). Christianity will not see a quiet victory in a sinful world, for it will be as violent as it is relentless, more so as the end is approached because satan is well aware of the time he has left (Rev 12 v 10 - 11). He knows he has a short time. The comfort for us lies in the fact that the horsemen are our allies in the great victory coming over the Universe. They fight with us and so we have nothing to fear from them.

THE 5TH AND 6TH SEALS

Turning from the visions of Christ's providence and governance we see the place of the believer in the conflict. One thing we observe straight away is that the Saint is fully aware of the nature of his Lord and he calls Him DESPOT (Rev 6 v 10). Even in Matthew (25 v 24) the slothful servant saw his master as hard (Gk. skleros) or austere. A despot in the biblical sense is a Sovereign Lord, and relates to the slave (See Thayer's Lexicon) hence showing absolute ownership and uncontrolled power. Lord (Gk: Kupios) had a wider meaning and applied to various ranks and relations of life (1 Pet 3 v 6).

Many times do the Saints affirm that their master is 'despot' (Luke 2 v 29, Acts 4 v 29, 2 Tim 2 v 21). This is far from the minds of many who profess to believe in Christ and see Him as a "flexible friend" to use the modern idiom. The New Testament Church was not afraid to use the term in prayer (Acts 4 v 29) and it was I think in part due to the right relationship they fostered that they could receive blessings.

It is because the Saints see the Lord as despot that I do not find the words of Revelation 6 (v 10) a complaint. For people who regularly pray "Thy kingdom come" (Matt 6 v 10), it is reasonable to ask how the prayer is coming along? "How long?" The day of vengeance is the day of judgement and I do not think that these Christians utter the words out of pique or hatred! (See Romans (12 v 10) 'not avenging yourselves'). I think that it is out of concern for the kingdom and for the manifestation of the righteousness of God that the Saints speak. They desire to see the power of the Gospel fulfilled (Rom 1 v 16 - 18).

It is also interesting to see the concern beyond the grave and hence the bond between the realities of Earth and Heaven. Luke (chapter 16 The rich man and Lazarus) shows the concern of the sinners, Revelation (chapter 6) the concern of the Saints. In glory, they do not relax in total carelessness and relief at having "escaped the world", for they are still bound up in its history. Christianity is not about escapism or total separation from the realities of life. We must of necessity deal with sinners (1 Cor 5 v 10) else we would be out of this world.

However, we have this comfort that God is concerned for His people (Psalm 116 v 15). It is not a light matter. Although the Saint has no right to special status or protection in life, it is not a matter of indifference. Men die for sin and men die for righteousness. But in righteousness God cares. It struck me as a wonderful thing that we take for granted, that God hears us at any time without appointment. Is this not an example to us that no matter how busy we are, we should listen to the concerns of others? God does, day and night, in whatever place we are, from the desert to "the belly of a fish", God hears. This is something we give thanks for.

Finally in connection with this section, we see the altar of God, the place of sacrifice (Rev 6 v 9, Ex 29 v 12). In Romans (chapter 12 v 1) it says that we should be the sacrifices. Throughout the book of Leviticus (cf Lev 1 v 3) the emphasis is upon physically perfect specimens, presentable specimens. I have seen many Christians with excellent souls and

spirits and that is all, because they let their bodies go to seed. If they were sheep for the sacrifice you would pass them by as unworthy! Our appearance is clearly of concern to God not just on the inside but on the outside, as we are stewards. Because our body will perish we nonetheless have a duty to it and our general presentation!

Moving on to the 6th seal, we see signs in the firmament. God, as we have often noted, did not create the sun and the moon primarily for light (Gen 1 v 3, cf Gen 1 v 14). They exist for the purpose of regulating what we call time and importantly, worship (congregations $\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$). The process of change is marked by divisions, divisions of labour, rest, worship, birth and death.

In Ezekiel 32 (v 3 - 4 cf v 7) the demise of Egypt is accompanied by signs in the Heavens showing the overthrow of the nation. Likewise in Isaiah (13 v 9 - 10) the Babylonian downfall shows similar tokens.

Now are we to see this phenomenon, as literal or figurative? If the heavens are removed with mountains and islands, how can the kings and rulers (Rev 6 v 15) hide in the mountains? In Revelation 8 (v 12) we see the same phenomena enlarged upon and seen as a partial occurrence.

I would suggest that the removal of those signs is figurative, in the same way as the four horseman of the apocalypse are symbols of power, here the signs in the heavens are symbols of order. The symbols which govern time and congregations fail to give the nations that order. Darkness and chaos return to them.

It is the culmination of history and the final product of integration into the void. Humanity out of control begins to reap the anger of God. In the same strange way it is recognised (Rev 6 v 16 - 17) but there is still the determination to hide rather than capitulate.

The symbols of (v 12) are of eclipses of the sun (dark), moon (red). Making friends was a way of avoiding eclipse (gk: $\epsilon\kappa\lambda\epsilon\iota\pi\omicron$ = failure, Luke 22 v 32). Peter's faith was shored up against eclipse (Luke 22 v 32). There is however nothing to stop the great eclipse of humanity when all of its institutions will fail.

The signs of Christ's coming are the litter of decay and destruction (Matt 24 v 6). In fact in all of these six seals we have latent death in some form or another. We have the breakdown of the old order and preservation and implementation of the new.

This act of preservation seen in the 3rd seal is carried on into the 6th seal. All is held back for the purpose of saving Gods people. This we shall look at in chapter 7.

CHAPTER 17. Revelation chapter 7

THE 144,000

I would suggest that we approach this passage with caution. It seems to me that where a great number of interpretations abound they do so because of:

- (1) A lack of evidence,
- (2) Missing the point of emphasis and focusing upon a peripheral.

Primarily we note that a number of persons of the tribes of Israel on earth (v 1 - 3), and that God withholds His wrath until these persons are sealed.

People have suggested that this is a Jewish remnant at the end time, but we have already conceded that it is difficult to put the 7 seals in any time zone of history and it is presumptuous to make that assumption here. It would also be dangerous to assume that Israel here is the Jewish nation on earth. Is God going to seal the Jews and not the Gentiles, such that the Jews are delivered from the judgements of God and the Gentiles are not? We shall return to that idea in a moment.

I will make an observation on John's attitude to the Jews and that is that he has no partiality for the Earthly Jew. He is writing well toward the end of the first century and at this point in time I would suggest that the majority of the true Jews (see in the early parts of Acts) who convert to Christianity have done so and that the conflicts are much more clearly defined. In Romans (chapter 11) Paul argues for a remnant among the Israelites by birth (Rom 11 v 7) but it would be unwarranted to presume that at a distance of 50 years or even further in history this ancient people who rejected Christ can still lay a particular claim to the olive tree.

John sees the conflict with Judaism as conflict with satanism (Rev 2 v 9, 3 v 9) and not with a misguided remnant. Jerusalem is no longer the earthly city (Rev 3 v 12, 21 v 2) and Zion is also spiritual (Rev 14 v 1). In this matter he is in full harmony with the rest of the New Testament (cf Gal 4 v 21 -31, Heb 12 v 22, John 8 v 38 and Luke 9 v 31 - the exodus from earthly Jerusalem).

A fact of the New Testament is that God no longer views the old Jews as having special privileges over the Gentiles (Eph 2 v 11 ff), and that the major thrust in Jew/Gentile conflict is to outwork this reconciliation (Gal 2 v 11 ff). It would seem therefore, on the basis of what we have said, strange to observe a divisive and special privilege being conferred on an Earthly Jew and not upon a Gentile. Hence on this count I will suggest that the Israel of Revelation chapter 7 is not composed of Earthly Jews.

I will take the thought further. Israel is as Christ argues (John 8 v 38) the elect of God (Rom 9 v 6). The New Covenant to Israel works on the heart (Heb 8 v 8 ff) and so a Jew becomes significant as a spiritual not a carnal person (Rom 2 v 29). These persons are sealed (2 Cor 1 v 21 - 22, Eph 1 v 13, Eph 4 v 30). You might recall that Ezekiel speaks of this in his prophecy

(Ezek 9).

When we examine the structure of the tribes laid out in Revelation (chapter 7) we observe the following. Dan and Ephraim are omitted. If we took this passage with reference to the literal Israel, then why are they not sealed? Secondly we see the inclusion of Joseph as a tribe, where in fact the Old Testament does not. There we see his two sons making up the number of 12 (Gen 48 v 17 ff and Gen 49, Josh 16). I see this inclusion of Joseph as a specific reference to the prophecy of Ezekiel (ch 37 cf v 16) that speaks of a reconciliation among the people of God under King David (Ezek 37 v 24). David symbolises Christ and the things of David fall to Christ, "Great David's greater son" (Acts 13 v 33 ff). The key of David is in Christ's hand (Rev 3 v 7)!

My suggestion is therefore that the 144,000 refer to Gods elect as part of " All Israel" (Rom 11 v 26). In Revelation (chapter 14 v 4) they are specifically termed the firstfruits.

Not one is missed out in any age, hence this should offer comfort concerning Gods care for his people. Now I will not pass on without considering the particular views of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Their current doctrine holds that the 144,000 are the only number of believers permitted to enter heaven. This view clearly teaches that there are **two groups** of believers, the Earthly who inherit the earth and the Heavenly who inherit heaven. This argument stands or falls on the burden of proof to show that the New Testament teaches that there are two types of believers with a different status. If you ever get into a discussion on this subject of the 144,000 with the Jehovah's Witnesses, approach it from this angle. I have not found the scripture to uphold this schismatic approach to the Church.

Now we shall try to reconcile the position of the 144,000 with the "great Multitude". Scripture teaches us that the total of Gods elect cannot be numbered (Hos 1 v 10, Gen 15 v 5). On the basis of this I would suggest that the 144,000, a distinct figure, is different from the "Great Multitude", an indeterminate figure. The 144,000 in Revelation (chapter 14 v 4) are called first fruits, implying that there are other fruits in Gods harvest (1 Cor 15 v 23, 1 Cor 15 v 15, Jas 1 v 18).

I would in conclusion suggest caution in our speculation upon the purpose of mentioning a specific number. The drift of Revelation chapter seven, is that we see Gods care for His people upon Earth (Heb 12 v 22) and His union with the total body of elect in glory. The size of the number should give us confidence that we are not a small insignificant group, but also that we are not a majority. We are cautioned against the despairs of Elijah (1 Kings 19 v 14 ff cf 18) in times of tribulations. When the World about us is falling into ruin we are told that we shall not fall with it. God separates us with a special mark, a seal of ownership and a seal that protects us from the fate of the rest of mankind. This is not necessarily physical protection, but it is most certainly spiritual protection. It is the forerunner of the Exodus prior to the inheritance of the heavenly Kingdom.

THE TRUMPET SEQUENCE

I have no reason so far to depart from our structure and you will see from that we are approaching another sequence of seven, which commences with the opening of the 7th Seal. As I have suggested, the series of Seals was an exposition of character rather than time. Here though the trumpets are possibly time orientated (see ch 9 v 12, ch 11 v 14).

The 7th Seal opens in silence (8 v 1) prior to the noise of the trumpets an angel appears with a golden censor and as this was a priestly function I see no reason not to identify this angel with Jesus, who gives "efficacy" to the prayer of the Saints (v 3).

Back in March 1980 we studied the altar of incense (Ex 30 v 1 - 6) and I draw your attention to some of its features.

1. 'MIZBeACH' from the Hebrew root 'Zabach' to kill or slaughter, hence indicating the sacrificial nature of prayer. Luke chapter 1 (v 9 - 10) shows its association with prayer.
2. Its height of 2 cubits (36") the prayer rises from a position of supplication (on our knees).
3. It has a roof and a parapet (cf Deut 22 v 8), perhaps indicating the safekeeping of the prayers
4. The altar possesses the power to decree (Rev 9 v 13 ff) and encourages the power of prayer (Matt 16 v 16 - 19). Revelation (chapter 9 v 20 - 21) shows this power aimed particularly against idolatry and false worship. This was particularly the case with Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10). (Self willed worship).

Prayer, we see from Luke (chapter 18 v 10 - 13) typifies the character of the individual. Hence we see in the nature of the incense (Ex 30 v 34), the purity and diversity of attributes, particularly holiness which is peculiar to Christ (v 38).

We must observe that prayers in themselves are words and that as such they have no efficacy unless accompanied by the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8 v 34, Heb 7 v 25). Also they must be fervent and come from a righteous nature (Jas 5 v 16 ff). Thus it is in (Rev 8 v 4) that we see prayer and Christ ascend from the altar to God. From this "hot bed" of prayer we see judgement cast into the earth (Rev 8 v 5). Prayer must also reflect the willingness to see sin judged (Jas 5 v 17). It was interesting to note that in the recent Beirut hostage drama, that the hostages saw retribution as wrong and had indeed grown sympathetic to the murders and criminals. This is a common attitude in our churches to sin. Let us not fall foul of this error!

And so from this background of prayer, the major weapon of change (in our attitudes and

political systems, 1 Tim 2 v 1 ff) we see the loud answer from the trumpeters of God. Let us firstly ascertain from scripture the meaning of the trumpet. A key chapter is (Numbers 10). The Hebrew word Chatzer means to sound forth, bright and clear showing the piercing nature of the sound. As such we see its fundamental function, namely to demand attention, for the purpose of a transaction.

In Numbers (10 v 2) it is for an assembly. I should point out that in Exodus 19 (v 10) 'Shophar' is used (from the Hebrew SHAPHAR to burn or blaze clear). Essentially identical in purpose. Notice also that in Exodus 19 (v 10) 'Jovel' is used (from the Hebrew Javel to sound aloud). This is the word 'JUBILee' which the trumpeter announces (Lev 25 v 8 f). Gideon assembles his men with a trumpet (Judges 6 v 33). In Numbers 10 (v 9) the trumpet sounds alarm (Hos 5 v 8). In Numbers 10 (v 10) it sounds for joy and gladness (2 Kings 11 v 13, 1 Chron 13 v 8; 15 v 24).

In view of the circumstances of Revelation chapter 8 (v1) I would suggest that the trumpet sounds an ALARM. This leads us to an important passage of scripture (Joshuah Chapter 6) and the fall of Jericho. Here we have as in Revelation 7 trumpets and a process of 7 blasts which culminate in the fall of the city. We see in Revelation (11 v 15 ff) that the final sounding culminates in the triumph of Christ's Kingdom.

With this in mind we can observe that the trumpets cry warning to the world and that in the affairs of men there are sufficient indicators that the progress is leading inexorably to the final judgement.

In Jericho the heedless population continued in their affairs rather as men did in the days of Noah, himself a man who warned the people (being a preacher of righteousness, Matt 24 v 37 ff). Christ made it plain that events would predict this coming just as leaves on a tree warn of summer (Matt 24 v 32). We see that many of the judgements are partial in nature (Rev 8 v 7, 9, 10) and as such are tokens of the impending doom.

I take it that these agencies of judgement are figurative in nature (v 7). Hail was a judgement upon Egypt (Ex 9 v 23 - 25), but God Himself comes under that symbol (Isaiah 28 v 2 and 17). David speaks of Gods hand under a similar metaphor (Psalm 18 v 13). Trees speak of human greatness for persons of eminence (Judges 9 v 8 - 13, Jer 7 v 20, Jer 17 v 8, Ezek 31 v 3, Dan 4 v 20 - 22).

God exercises restraints (Rev 7 v 1 - 3) until His people are safe but then pours out his anger. In this first trumpet there is both a warning and an event whereby we can see Gods power and government functioning to depose the rule of men.

We close with remembering that our glance at the earthly churches was tinged with sadness at their weakness and imperfections, but how marvellously did this contrast with the vision of the throne and the structured and positive government of the Kingdom of God. The temporal churches are not designed for any permanence but are part of the conflict, and as such they are on earth witnesses of the power of Godly judgement.

THE TRUMPETS CONTINUED....

Our broad structure of Revelation has revealed basic symbols which are then expanded upon, namely the candlesticks, seals, trumpets and vials. We have warned against a sequential interpretation (see structure 2), but rather an interpretation of character. The opening of the seals revealed events already in progress and indeed events that were contemporaneous. The 7th seventh seal is now subdivided into a trumpet sequence (chapter 8).

The prayers of the Saints are indeed aggressive and issue in fire against the earth (Rev 8 v 5), to them "thy kingdom come" is a petition with all of the inevitability of judgement which they welcome.

It is the final conflict between the true heirs of the kingdom and of the pretenders. The first four trumpets as a group see the judgements of God fall against the Earth.

A number which occurs 11 times (possibly 12) is '**one third**' and here is perhaps a key to the meaning of the chapter. It is connected, I believe, with the doctrine of election, found in Romans (chapter 9) which so many people find unpalatable. The birthright which Esau sold for a bowl of porridge cost him his inheritance. This "ruddy" man of the earth despised the gift of God which Jacob coveted and schemed for. Now in Deuteronomy (chapter 21 v 17) the first born inherited a double portion over the second born (Esau lost his by his actions). Thus in an estate where two beneficiaries existed the division would be into three parts, of which the first born would gain two thirds and the second born one third.

In the New Testament Christ and the brethren are clearly first born (Gk. PROTOKOS Rom 8 v 29, Heb 1 v 6, Heb 12 v 23). Hence to them falls the double portion. On this basis I would suggest that in Revelation 8, the false Israel is continually smitten by God, but the true Israel (holding the remaining two thirds) is unscathed.

The conflict is not dissimilar from that preceding the deliverance of Israel from the land of Egypt, as can be seen in the signs. Also we have seen at the start of the chapter the cry of the people of God (cf Ex 2 v 23). John sees the church in the role of the Old Testament nation (Rev 1 v 6) and with the final plagues the song of this deliverance is sung (Rev 15 v 1 - 3). You will recall that in Exodus (chapter 15 v 1) the song of Moses was the first song in the Bible and it was the song of deliverance. Although I do not intend to go into it here, I do not attempt to align Egypt or Babylon with any particular nation on earth, but rather a general religious corruption which is present in all sinful government.

As the second trumpet sounds a great mountain is cast into the sea (chapter 8 v 8). This I take to be indicative of the fall of Babylon (cf Jer 51 v 25) and it is a theme that will receive much enlargement as we progress in the book of Revelation (Ch 18 v 8 ff). In Revelation (chapter 8 v 9) the further destruction of life and trade is seen, in Revelation (chapter 18 v 11 and v 17), the collapse of the unrighteous trade is perhaps not far away and you may

recall the problems it has through its own dishonest dealings.

The third trumpet sees the fall of a "star". This I take to be a person and we see scripture associate heavenly bodies with great persons (Gen 37 v 9 - 11, Num 24 v 17, Is 14 v 7). In our own day we talk about pop stars, superstars, film stars to indicate a person above the rest. I suggest that the star appearing here is satan himself (John 12 v 31 ff, Luke 10 v 17 ff). Incidentally John (chapter 12 v 31) states that judgement of the world had begun. It raises a question as to why and what was the purpose of the Lord allowing satan access to heaven after his defection (Job 2 v 1)?

The devil causes bitterness among men by the idolatry that he fosters (Deut 29 v 14 ff). This I would suggest is particularly bitterness against God. There is a by word among men that satan will take care of his own. This is a lie, for he torments and debases his servants until they fall under the full anger of God's wrath. In Exodus (chapter 15 v 22) the children of Israel came across bitter water on their journey (three days on). It was a tree cast into the waters which sweetened them. Satan however, uses the law of God to bring bitterness into mens life (Rom 7 v 8 ff), but Christ by his death on the tree removes that bitterness and sweetens our lives (Gal 3 v 13 - 14).

The fourth trumpet sounds and more signs and wonders proceed in the realms of nature. In closing this section I would make the following observations.

These phenomena may not be literal but figurative in the realm of nature. They were associated with Pentecost (Acts 2 v 17 ff, cf v 19) which is a quotation from the book of Joel (ch 2 v 28 - 32). What is significant is that the signs were associated with the "last days", the "great" day of the Lord and the day of "Salvation". The apostles saw themselves in the days of the end, and for this reason I would suggest that the first four trumpets have already sounded and are preparatory for the final trumpet.

The problem of mankind today is that his whole humanistic hope is based upon the doctrine of continuity. Change does not occur, or at least imperceptibly. This is the principle of organic evolution. Peter warns us against falling under the spell of this doctrine (2 Pet 3 v 4). Changes are afoot and the Christian must be aware of these and not be lulled into a false sense of thinking that the Lord has delayed his coming, let us eat drink and be merry (Luke 12 v 45). The Revelation of John causes us to see that God is working his judgement out and we must be ever prepared to see its fulfilment.

CHAPTER 20. Revelation chapter 9

We have passed a sequence of four trumpets after the 7th seal and we have now come to a sequence of three trumpets with their accompanying WOES (chapters 9 v 12, 10 v 14). Whether you accept that this trumpet has sounded or not depends on how you interpret the events portrayed. Firstly you will note that we see a star **fallen**, not falling (Gk. PEPTOKOTA). I see no reason to distinguish this from chapter 8 (v 10) and 'wormwood'. We are merely observing another of satan's peculiar actions, but whether this is triggered by the trumpet is not made clear.

The key of the abyss is given over to the 'star', thus it is **not** naturally in his power, but I suggest in Christ's (Rev 1 v 18).

Am I right to imply that hell (Gk, Hades) and the abyss are related? In Romans (chapter 10 v 7) the abyss is contrast with heaven as well as implying Christ went there. In Acts (chapter 2 v 27) we are told that Christ was in *hades*². Thus the abyss has as part of it the grave, that is the abode of the dead. It also has a more sinister compartment.

The words 'bottomless pit' is an interpretation because it is one word, "abyss" in the original. Do we consider the 'abyss' as some invisible place beyond our sight and senses? In the Greek translation of the OT, the term "face of the deep" uses the same word that we have here in Revelation, "abyss". *Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Gen 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep (abyss). And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.* Is the abyss a reference to this very earth, not some ethereal holding pen for satan?

In Luke (chapter 8 v 26 ff cf 31) the devils ask Jesus that they may not be sent into the abyss (bottomless pit) and they are sent into the swine (v 33). The beast which carries the scarlet woman (Rev 17 v 3 cf v 8) comes from the abyss and goes to destruction. The abyss then is for the demons a place of confinement, not the ultimate place of destruction (the Gehenna or hell of fire). The devil himself is bound here (Rev 20 v 1 - 3, a statute of limitation) for a thousand years, that is the Millennium. For a detailed examination of Millennial views see appendix 3.

There is a distinct similarity between Tartaros (2 Pet 2 v 4) and the abyss, (cf Jude 6). So we notice in the good pleasure of God fallen angels, demons, are some bound in the pit or abyss, and freed to work in the lives of men and women to torment them (Luke 8 the Gadarene, Acts 16 v 16 the female slave, see also Acts 19 v 13).

The devil and evil are great realities and for this reason we can never ever be certain of true friendships, and honest, reliable relationships with unbelievers (Eph 2 v 1 - 2) for they are at enmity with Christ and satan will direct them against the people of Christ. This will be true even in close family circles where there are unbelievers. This is a mighty struggle (Eph 6 v 12).

From the pit (Rev 9 v 2) comes darkness and locusts (cf Ex 10 v 12 v 22). These locusts do not however eat the vegetation (chapter 9 v 3 - 4), rather they torment men. There are again similarities with this passage and the book of Joel. In Joel God sends locusts on the ungodly (cf Joel 1 v 5 - 7) (Joel 2 v 1 - 4 ff). Israel of old was eventually consumed by the persons and things it most admired - Babylon. Since Babylon (Rev 17) is motivated by the beast from the abyss, so in turn it is consumed by the things it desires most. This perhaps explains the vision of the locust, (v 7 ff horses, crowns, gold etc.). This principle of consumption is outlined in Paul's letter to the Romans (ch 1 v 21 ff). Stated succinctly, when men act like animals, God makes the animal consume them! (AIDS among sexually immoral

² HADES is the realm of the dead, we might call it 'gravedom'.

people may prove just this point!). Sin breeds torment (v 5 - 6).

As I have said before, do not think that satan will look after his own. No, he will rather torment them. It is not in Hell that satan torments men, Christ does that contrary to popular myth (Rev 14 v 9 -11). The devil torment men in this life. Just as satan and his own become their own instruments of torture we see the parallel with the old story of Haman and Mordecai in the book of Esther.

These creatures of the abyss have a king over them (Rev 9 v 11) called Apollyon (Gk. Abaddon). There is a parallel here with the man of sin, the son of perdition (Gk. Appoluo) in 2 Thessalonians (chapter 2 v 3 - 8). When the restraints are removed, the key given and the pit opened, then the great evil will flow over the lands.

Many people will have had a historicist view of this passage and have related it to the period of Mohammedon uprising. There is a great objection to this interpretation, since the conflict was then between Muslim and "Christian". There was no discrimination. Here in Revelation (chapter 9 v 4) there is discrimination such that the Christian remains untouched. Similarly in Jeremiah's day you may recall the Godly remnant who hearken to God's voice were delivered (through captivity) and were not killed in the conflict.

When this evil is released upon the earth it will have a limited duration (Rev 9 v 5). Whether the 5 months relates to the natural span of locusts (a season) or has a deeper significance, I am not certain. There will be a great torment among men, paranoia on an immense scale. People will look for death as a better alternative (Rev 9 v 6) but will not be allowed to commit suicide. Death will flee from them.

What we have in this chapter then is a precursor of the afflictions of Hell. Men and Demons interacting to produce great despair and torment. It is something that will not afflict the Saint who has the mark of God. It is like that Passover night in the land of Egypt when those who displayed the mark of God stayed safe, but heard the wailing of the houses inflicted by The Angel of God. (Can a Christian be possessed by a Devil? not here!) We shall perhaps only know its true time when we see the events come about. In some ways it might come as the famine in Ethiopia, whose pictures you have seen on the news. Desperate and starving people afflicted by more than hunger and unable to die.

CHAPTER 21. Revelation chapter 9 verses 12 - 21.

The sound of the trumpet and the voice from the altar calls us to remember that we are still in a passage connected with the prayers of the Saints at the opening of the 7th seal (ch 8 v 1 ff, Ex 30 v 1 - 10) which describes the golden altar or altar of incense. The horns are one piece with the top, and horns are symbols of power (1 Kings 22 v 11 and 1 Kings 32 v 17). As such it was also a symbol of salvation (2 Sam 22 v 3) which perhaps gave rise to the concept of sanctuary (1 Kings 2 v 28 ff). It is important to note that in (Rev 9 v 13) the voice is coming from the horns of the altar.

We may also note from Exodus chapter 30 (v 10) that the Day of Atonement called for blood to be sprinkled upon the horns (Lev 16 v 18/19) to hallow it from the uncleanness of people. This teaches us that prayer or communication cannot be maintained indefinitely without sacrifice. Now it may be the blood upon the horns that calls for the next woes. In the presence of God, blood has a loud voice! Cain could not hear it, but God did (Gen 4 v 10), so how much more will God listen to the blood of his only begotten son (Heb 12 v 24)?

He calls forth the loosing of the four messengers bound at the Euphrates, the great river. It was the fourth river that flowed out of Eden (Gen 2 v 14). It formed the Eastern boundary of the nation of Israel (Gen 15 v 18). Babylon the Great sat upon this river and there Jeremiah points to the spoiling of Israel by this nation (Jer 13 v 1 ff) (Is 8 v 7-8). Jeremiah also predicts the fall of this nation when he casts the word of God into it (Jer 51 v 59).

What though in the apocalypse of John is the river Euphrates? Literal or figurative? The literalists take it as an assault on Earthly Israel by Eastern Nations (Hal Linsey, *Late Great Planet Earth*, p. 82). This is sloppy exegesis and characterises Linsey's book. The reader is pressurised to accept its unfounded statements by such remarks as "True bible scholars have ..." (p 154) which means you are not a true bible scholar if you disagree or if you haven't recognised it! In the passage under discussion Lindsay can flip from the literal to the figurative at will. It is all right to have a literal river Euphrates but the "Lion headed horses" became an Oriental army! Notice, also injected, are comments about the four angels as vicious and depraved. Who is not to say that they were Gods messengers of destruction holding back the forces of hell? Hendriksen also adopts this view! Yet they are often good as in Revelation chapter 7 (v 1), however see Wordsworth's commentary (Rev 9 p. 209). The angel of the Lord held back Balaam (Num 22 v 22).

Such exposition as Lindsay's is very dangerous in that it can cause national prejudice against such people as the Chinese and Russians, for non-biblical reasons.

I will not profess to make a full explanation of the passage before us as there are some difficulties. I think that we must view it in the light of the vials (phials) which parallel the trumpet. The sixth vial speaks also of the Euphrates (Rev 16 v 12 - 16), which dries up. Is this a river or a people? In (Rev 17 v 15) where the harlot sits, the waters are people. We have the powers of darkness (Babylon) dominating the world.

So we have the possibility that the angels are God's angels, bound at the limits of Gods Kingdom. It does not say what direction or action they take with respect to this river! However we see the events connected with their loosing in the mighty WORD (Rev 9 v 16), which flows into the slaughter of THE THIRD (which we suggested was the ungodly men of Revelation chapter 8 and 19).

In connection with this horde (20,000 of thousands) I venture to point out that it is associated with the host of God (Heb 12 v 22, Jude 14, Dan 7 v 10, Rev 5 v 11). A passage very close is Psalm 68 (v 17). Have we any reason to suppose that the horde before us is any other than the host of God? Hyacinth (Rev 9 v 17) is a colour in the Levitical dispensation (Ex 25 v 4 - 5). A lion the symbol of Judah's power (Rev 9 v 17). Fire and brimstone are Gods agencies of punishing the wicked. In the closing verses of this chapter we see that (Rev 9 v

20) there is a move of this army to bring repentance. The implication is that those who do not repent, perish. This army may also be identified with the army of Revelation 19 (v 11 - 16).

So what am I saying in this section? I am suggesting that as in the first woes we had the effect of satan upon the unbeliever, in the second woe we have the effect of the host of God upon the unbeliever. It is a type of pincer movement. The Kingdom of God is loosed at her boundary to go forth and conquer by the power of heaven, the ungodly. On the basis of this and the similarities observed in (ch 16 v 12-16 cf v 16) Armageddon is a spiritual conflict.

Now at the start of the first woe ministry I cautioned about dating the event. I do so again here. This may have commenced at Pentecost or it may in some greater measure be the final spiritual conflict which precedes the day of judgement (see Rev 20).

In conclusion we see the extent of wickedness in the world (chapter 9 v 20 - 21). The word translated "witchcrafts" or "sceries" (v 21) is of interest. It is Pharmakeion (Gk), whence we derive the word pharmacy. There is the association of witchcraft and drugs, perhaps from the practice of making the drugs by witches, and using them in the advance of their practice. It has been observed that the word sorceries lie between the words murder and fornication. A suggestion is that Pharmaka produce abortions and infanticide caused by fornication. This is a novel conjecture. It does however raise the issue of drugs and the associated culture that it creates. We should consider this perhaps as a study on its own. Drugs themselves are amoral objects of creation. Because of the peculiar behavioural patterns and functions that they induce they are open to abuse and the consequent dehumanisation of man the image of God!

CHAPTER 22. Revelation chapter 10

THE LORD OF TIME

We now view another angel who is **strong** coming down out of heaven (v 1) perhaps to distinguish him from the angel of chapter 5 (v 2). Let us not forget that we are in a section dealing with the second woe (Rev 11 v 14), and so the events here portrayed may not form a digression or intermission but rather a continuation. The division of chapters we must remind ourselves is a human imposition upon Gods word and not a Divine division.

If as has been suggested the sixth angel sounds the gospel trumpet (v 13), then John is given his orders under that same clarion call.

The strong angel, I take to be Jesus Christ. The symbols of rainbow (Ezek 1 v 28, Rev 4 v 3), the cloud (Rev 1 v 7), the face (Rev 1 v 16), and His feet (Rev 1 v 15) are all indicative of the person of Christ. Here He prophetically stands on earth and sea, with all under His feet. As He speaks to John, so He speaks to his disciples (Matt 28 v 16 - 20).

John, ever faithful to declare what he hears, prepares to note the words of thunder (Rev 10

v 4) indeed we may recall that John himself is declared one of the sons of thunder (Mark 3 v 17) so named perhaps because of the force of their delivery and application of God's wrath (Luke 9 v 54). These terrible thunders though, are not for our ears. "Write them not", He declares. Thus we see that there are some things that God declares openly and others that are hidden (Deut 29 v 29).

Let us pursue this thought. Revelation was written for the purpose of showing "what must be accomplished" (Rev 1 v 1). This does not say how it is to be accomplished! Prophetic speculation endeavours to tie God down in the method of His accomplishments and the time of the same. This curiosity is seen at the time of the Ascension (Acts 1 v 6 - 9), but the Lord directs them only towards the accomplishment. I think that this subject of prophetic fulfilment has been one of the most divisive subjects the Church has had to contend with, because it has tried to manufacture a doctrine from the wrong type of material. The voice of thunders represents perhaps missing data! Without it we cannot clearly state the course of future events, but we know the outcome.

We now come to a difficult passage (Rev 10 v 5 - 7). The Lord swears that there should be 'time' no longer (Gk. Chronos whence chronometer, chronological etc). Commentators imply that this means "delay". God is no longer going to delay his purpose. However, Chronos in the Johannean usage speaks of time (cf John 5 v 6, 7 v 33, 12 v 35, 14 v 9; Rev 2 v 21, 6 v 11, 10 v 6, 20 v 3).

Time is relegated, as is the sea to the past (Rev 21 v 1, 21 v 4). Yet, time for what? time for repentance, time to preach, time as a cyclic phenomena?

Before we answer this let us examine the connection with the rest of the section. 'But' (Rev 10 v 6, Gk. Ἀλλὰ) can be used as a disjunctive to point to an alternative or contrasting function as in Revelation 10 (v 9). It can also be used in the conjunctive sense (John 11 v 15) as "nevertheless, notwithstanding" (Rev 20 v 6). I take it in this sense here (Rev 10 v 6). What follows is therefore, notwithstanding, unaffected by what has preceded. Time will cease, but it will not affect the mystery of God, which shall be completed by the seventh trumpet the last trumpet.

But time! Time for what? How do we define time? Generally we can define it in terms of the modal aspects of temporal reality (see Appendix 2), that structure we use as a tool to aid thought and analytical process. Take history. History is the formative process and is marked by progression. Time in historic form is seen in the process of change. In arithmetic terms it is quantity, minutes, seconds. In a sense time is a medium which coheres the various modes of existence and reality. Time is a glue which holds all the phenomena of this life in place. The removal of time in this world unglues the whole process of being and life as it is known ceases. When Christ commands that time ceases, temporal reality is brought to a stand still like a frozen waterfall. Immobilised and **ready for judgment**. Time and process after judgement proceed in different directions. The Christian with the Psalmist already acknowledging the Lordship of God over time *Psa 31:15 My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.*

Notwithstanding the "mystery of God", shall be completed. What is the mystery of God?

Colossians chapter 2 (v 2) uses the expression and some versions have been annotated to refer it to Christ, the Father or both. Alford finds no external evidence to support the apparent additions. What is apparent, is that the churches should grow together to understand this mystery.

In a general sense and following the subject matter of (Col 1 v 24 - 2 v 2), this mystery is the mystery of the Kingdom of God in all its facets. The indwelling of Christ (Col 1 v 27, 1 Tim 3 v 9, 16), godliness (1 Tim 3 v 16), the unifying of the church (Eph 1 v 9 - 10, Eph 3 vv 3 - 5, 9, 18).

That it cannot refer to the person of Christ specifically must be acknowledged on the basis that His work on the cross in death and resurrection **is finished**. If we look to the outworking of the work of Christ in the Kingdom of God, this is an ongoing work and is not complete until the Day of Judgment. This is the thrust of the kingdom parables (Matt 13 v 10 - 11). The parables look at the work of the kingdom in modal spheres (see appendix 2).

MATTHEW

13 v 22 Faith:	The Kingdom received.
13 v 27 Biotic:	The seed, kingdom growth.
13 v 30 Judicial:	Kingdom in judgment.
13 v 31 Physical:	Kingdom dimensionally and in growth.
13 v 33 Kinetic:	Kingdom in motion.
13 v 39 Historical:	Kingdom in the formative process.
13 v 44 Aesthetic:	Kingdom in its beauty/harmony.
13 v 45 Economic:	Kingdom in value.
13 v 47 Arithmetic:	Kingdom in discrete quantity.

Summary;

Following the release of the Kingdom from its original boundaries (Euphrates) it now extends to the whole world. Christ is exercising His power over land and sea until the work or the mystery of God is finished. Then comes the end!

CHAPTER 23. Revelation chapter 10 v 8 - chapter 11

John is now commanded to take the book from the strong angel and eat it *Rev 10:10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. Rev 10:11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.* By this act I take it that he is to imbibe the words and issue them again to the nations. If we are correct that John is an old man at this time, he personally has little time to effect this duty and so we might presume that he personifies the church in its duty to propagate the word. This duty is in line with the command of Christ (Matt 28 v 16, Acts 1 v 8 ff). It is an action similar to that given to Ezekiel (Ezek 2 v 9 - 3 v 11). This note eaten by Ezekiel had the same effect in his mouth (and belly). I see no reason to doubt that the effects are also produced by a similar subject in the writings. (Ezek 2 v 9 - 10) namely Lamentations, mourning and

woes. Remember that we are in a section dealing with **WOES**.

This should remind the church that Evangelism, spreading the Good News is one duty but only part of the whole counsel of God. Let us not forget that another duty of a prophet is to speak to men about history and Gods greater part in the shaping of men's lives, rebuking them for sin and bringing them to judgement. In this sense the prophet is the orator of history and this we saw in our studies in Jeremiah (cf Jer 9 v 12 - 16). In this world the church holds the truth of things to come. Because of this great trust (i.e. because it is worthy), to the church is also committed judgement (Matt 18 v 18 ff 1 Cor 6 v 2 ff). Our power and progress should not be regarded in terms of the effect we seem to have, but it rests in terms of the duties and authority given. In terms of effectiveness, Jeremiah was a failure. In terms of authority, duty, and obedience, he was an eminent success.

Further, John imitates a passage in Ezekiel (cf Rev 11 v 1 ff, Ezek 40 v 1 ff). You will find that many commentators refer to Ezekiel's "millennial temple". This they take to be a building, reconstructing the fabric of Judaism in better days (that is they think that it will be built in the future). This however is conjecture. A similar passage occurs in Zechariah (ch 2 v 1 ff).

Let us remind ourselves of two things.

1. Ezekiel writes from captivity to encourage the captives to see a future glory.
2. Zechariah writes during the time of the rebuilding of the earthly temple (cf Zech 1 v 1, Hag 1 v 1). Clearly the rebuilt second temple was not the subject of the vision (Hag 2 v 3 ff). A temple yet remained to be built. For this reason some men see it as being a future earthly temple. Because of the parallel symbolism I take it that John is referring to this very temple (Gk. Naos), The body of Christ.

Jesus had clear views about this temple (John 2 v 18 ff). He makes **no** reference to a future earthly building, but to His own body. This body is not simply the resurrection physique of Christ but the people of God (1 Cor 3 v 16 ff, 1 Cor 6 v 19, 2 Cor 6 v 16, Eph 2 v 19 ff). If you read the New Testament objectively, can you seriously conclude that God has any designs on rebuilding an earthly temple? Can you seriously believe that the prophets of the Old Testament saw differently? Can you believe that the history of redemption commends to you and I a building of stones as the culminating work of Christ? A dead monument to the blood of bulls and goats?

There are many people in this world who venerate religious paraphernalia yet neglect the true heart and substance of religion. God does not redeem rubble, He redeems souls. It is by The Great Soul of the universe, not by empty shadows (Heb 9 v 23 ff).

John measures the true worshippers of God (Rev 11 v 1)

1. To cause us to consider former prophesies of our grandeur in Gods eyes as seen in the Old Testament prophets.
2. To enforce in our minds that great unity with the Saints of the 1st covenant,

the true Jews, and that we are separate from the Gentiles (see Rom 2 v 28).

Now the next part of the prophecy of Revelation can be viewed, I think in two ways distinguished not so much in events but in the times in which they occur.

The principle characters are two witnesses who prophecy. They are distinguished in terms of their power (Rev 11 v 6). They can shut the heavens and turn water into blood. Elijah is the scriptural character who had power over the rain (James 5 v 17 - 18), and Moses turned rivers into blood (Ex 7 v 17). These great men confounded the disciples at the mount of transfiguration (Luke 9 v 28 ff), when they appeared in the Glory of Christ.

Luke (chapter 9) should dispel any doubts that the purpose of Moses and Elijah was any different from the purpose of Jesus Christ. Both Saints spoke openly in the hearing of the disciples about the departure (literally Exodus in the Greek) which Christ was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Moses had clearly warned of the coming of the greater prophet (Deut 18 v 15 ff) and he appears in glory as if it were to bear witness of this great fact.

These great men are symbols of the Older Testament summed up in two words, the LAW and the PROPHETS. Christ did not come upon earth to annihilate the great works which these Saints had performed on His behalf. Indeed as He says He came to confirm their works (Matt 5 v 7). Confirm rather that fulfil is a justifiable interpretation based upon the use of the word in (James 2 v 23). He therefore establishes their words by an even greater authority. He upholds the very principles that they spoke. The LAW and the PROPHETS is confirmed by Christ. Approved we might say.

John in Revelation is reminding us of the validity of the principle laid down under the first covenant confirmed in Christ. The New Testament introduces no new laws to us.

This is a warning to the church. The gospel is not a substitute for the law and the prophets. The gospel is not an alternative to the law and the prophets. The candlesticks are still fed by the oil derived from these long established olive trees. The source of the gospel is the LAW and the PROPHETS.

CHAPTER 24. Revelation chapter 11

In our last ministry we viewed actions that had a distinctly Old Testament flavour, namely eating the scroll and measuring the Temple. We also saw the two witnesses which connected with Moses and Elijah, the law and the prophets. At this point dispensationalists will seek a literal return of the two men. A principle already grasped, I hope, is that a well known figure may turn up as someone else. (cf Mal 4 v 5; Matt 11 v 14).

What does all of this mean? I will suggest that there is a pattern that often repeats itself in scripture (Matt 24 v 37, 2 Peter 2 v 1). John has outlined patterns that have an Old Testament reality in the days of Ezekiel, and there are features in the lives of the two witnesses that we might associate with the work of Christ. In chapter 11 (v 2) we see the city of God, which I take to symbolise the Church under attack (Rev 21 v 2) for a period of 42 months. If we take the lunar month at a figure of 30 days, 42 months is equivalent to 1260

days (chapter 11 v 3) the period of witness. In Revelation chapter 13 (v 5) we see that this is the period of the Beasts career! In (Rev 12 v 6), 1260 days is a period of nourishment. However are these real days and months or in symbolic time³?

Three and one half years (42 months/1260 days) is a period we note in Elijah's life (James 5 v 7) as a period of judgement. It is also I believe a passage of time equivalent to the ministry of Christ. There are three recorded Passovers in John's gospel (John 2 v 13, 6 v 4, 11 v 5). Now if John (4 v 35) refers to winter, since it relates to events at the time, Jesus goes back to Galilee in the winter (John 4 v 43). This could make the feast of (John 5 v 1) another Passover. Hence from Passovers in the life of Christ His ministry extends beyond 3 years.

We also see from the verses in Daniel Chapter 9 (cf v 24 ff) a period of 70 weeks. This is broken down into 7 weeks, 62 weeks and 1 week. According to Daniel (9 v 27) the ministry of Messiah is "cut off" at the end of the 62nd week (the 69th week of Daniel). The last week of Daniel is a split week (2 x 3 1/2 days) before the 'desolation'.

The second similarity to the ministry of Jesus is that the witnesses are slain on the streets where their Lord was crucified (Rev 11 v 8). We might infer that this is Jerusalem, but I think it is a city with the "spirit of Jerusalem"! It is called the Great City (the megapolis). The Great City is seen in (Rev 16 v 19, Rev 17 v 18, Rev 18 v 16, Rev 18 v 19, Rev 18 v 21). We have thus aligned many of the worlds major systems (Egypt, Sodom, Jerusalem) with Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots. The prophetic conflict is therefore with the world spirit.

The third similarity to Jesus ministry is the resurrection after the world thinks that it has slain them (Rev 11 v 11). The world rejoices at its apparent triumph over the law of God (cf Rev 11 v 10, Luke 23 v 12).

Fourthly the two witnesses like Christ ascend (11 v 12) up into heaven. In the light of the evidence we have examined, it is also possible that we are in fact looking at the ministry of Christ under a different symbolism or perhaps it is something that shall occur in the future. This we must determine as we progress through the book. Thus ends the second woes.

The last trumpet now sounds (Rev 11 v 15) and I believe that the section concludes at (v 18).

We appear to look at events now that have already occurred, but we are looking at a different perspective. Questions to be answered are (1) who is the woman (2) the child (3) the dragon and (4) Michael?

With regard to the woman we see her clothed in the sun with the moon under her feet (Rev 12 v 1). These images appear in the dream of Joseph (Gen 37 v 5 - 10). The twelfth star would be Joseph himself. These images thus have an established relationship with Israel and its origins. This is further confirmed from the book of Micah (4 v 1 - 13). Micah's prophecy is

³ I suggest as a principle which you may care to confirm for yourself, that when God speaks of Earth time (real time), He uses literal numbers. However, when the time refers to types or is in a symbolic context, then it is non-literal.

fixed in the Messianic period (v 1). This leads in to the precise prophecy concerning the birth of the Messiah at Bethlehem! (Micah 5 v 1 - 2).

I would suggest therefore that the woman is the daughter of Zion, or the historic church. This would fix the time of this prophecy as the period prior to the coming of Christ.

The woman is in conflict with the great red dragon (Rev 12 v 3). This creature is pictured again in (Rev 13 v 1) and in (Rev 17 v 3 v 8) where it is the transport of the Harlot.

Whether we now view the horns and the heads as historic persons to come on earth or features of the Beast remains for us to confirm. However, we do see that they are present at the time of the incarnation. We also see that the historic spirit of Babylon the great did not die with the earthly kingdom. Earthly Babylon was moved by this beast just as the spiritual kingdom in contention with the church is moved.

This struggle between the beast and the woman is not fully appreciated by the churches. It is not an earthly struggle although it is often described under such terms in order to help us to visualise it. This perhaps leads to so many earthly interpretations of the book of Revelation. Paul gives us the perspective (Eph 6 v 12).

Men are mere pawns in the cosmic battle that satan wages. The great camouflage of satan is that he has convinced men that he does not exist! He is no longer a reality. Scepticism about satan has and is leading men to fight shadows. Know your enemy and recognise his handiwork. Jesus does both.

CHAPTER 25. Revelation chapter 12

The accompanying chart will serve to summarise some of the symbols that we have covered so far.

The first 4 seals we have considered as running parallel through all history, since we saw them in the Old Testament (Zech 6 v 1 - 8). We also saw no reason not to link all 4 horsemen just to the time of Christ. The horses govern men under the providence of God, hence I span them from the fall to the last trumpet. The fifth seal likewise I link across history from Abel (Gen 4 v 10; Matt 23 v 35) to the last martyr.

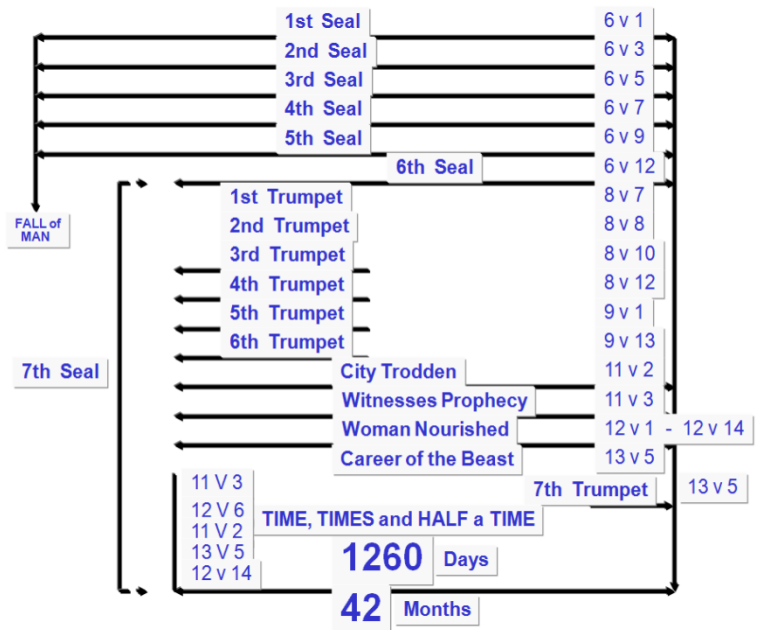
The sixth seal I have run from the time of Christ. The signs were associated with the fall of Egypt (Ezek 32 v 3 cf v 7) and Babylon (Isaiah 13 v 9 - 10), and here we are looking at the destruction brought about by Christ (Rev 6 v 16).

The seventh seal (Rev 8 v 1) is the primer for the trumpet sequence. This is a section which reminds us of the fall of Jericho and the preceding succession of trumpets (Joshua 6). We also noticed the battle of the true heirs with the false heirs of the kingdom and the casting out of satan. Again I find no ground for continuity because I do not equate Revelation chapter 8 (v 10) with Revelation 9 (v 1). For this reason I have pulled the trumpets, the first 6, together from the time of Christ.

The seventh trumpet (Rev 11 v 15 ff) is placed squarely at the last judgement.

Finally we look at a series of events linked by a time sequence of 1260 days or 42 months. I have also associated the 1260 days with "time, times and 1/2 time based upon (Rev 12 v 6 and v 14). The time, times and 1/2 time is something that draws us back to the prophecy of Daniel (ch 12 v 7).

On the basis of this time period of 3 1/2 years I have paralleled the event of the city being trodden down, the prophecy of the law and the prophets, the history of the woman and the career of the beast.



Various facets of this period are examined in detail as we progress further through the prophecy of John.

We move back to chapter 12 to reconsider the images of the woman and her progress. The Woman we have suggested is the virgin daughter of Israel, the historic church. The child bought forth is I suggest Jesus Christ. He is the "iron rod" shepherd (Rev 12 v 5, Rev 19 v 15). This (shepherding with a rod of iron) is a privilege communicated to the faithful (Rev 2 v 27).

The child is pursued by the dragon (Rev 12 v 4) and thus we see who motivated King Herod in his infanticide policy (Matt 2 v 16) the devil. The child is caught up to heaven (Rev 12 v 5) and the woman passes into the wilderness (Rev 12 v 6) or more correctly Eremos, a desert.

We therefore see the woman as part of the two Testaments (BC and AD). This is further confirmative of the woman as the historic church, she who spans the ages. Under another allegory in (Romans 11 v 16 ff) she is pictured as the olive tree which continues with new branches. If you haven't realised it yet, there are no grounds for any dispensationalism, separate Jewish/Christian/Gentile groups in John's revelation! The woman was Jewish in both covenants - but she was the true Jew. Historic continuity was part of Paul's teaching.

I mentioned previously that there is a cyclic phenomenon in scripture, patterns that recur. So too here in the history of the church.

1. She is in a desert (Rev 12 v 6 v 14) where she is nourished. This throws us back to the Exodus and the manna (Ex 16 v 4). The manna was a type or shadow of the Jesus (John 6 v 32) and the church now is fed by the manna.

2. There is an Exodus from Jerusalem (Luke 9 v 31). Jerusalem or Judaism was a form of bondage (Gal 4 v 21 - 31). This bondage is as we saw the bondage of world religion, or Babylon the Great (Rev 11 v 8).
3. We have the church in the desert (Acts 7 v 38, 7 v 44) where we now find her. This requires some explanation. What do we take to be the desert? In the Old Testament (Ex 16 v 4) the desert was a place of trial. Peter speaks of trials (1 Pet 1 v 6 ff) concerning faith, and this is for us now, no different to the experience of the children of Israel.

But what is the desert? It is I suggest to you the realm of the "Whore of Babylon" (Rev 17 v 3). The woman who bore the king is in the same place as the woman who has kingship (Rev 17 v 18). It is strange to consider the realm of Babylon with all of her wealth (Rev 18 v 11) as a desert, but that is just what she is. Deserts are made deserts in spiritual terms by the lack of the presence of God. When the psalmist sees his life in the valley of the shadow (Psalm 23 v 4) it is not a desperate or empty experience. God is there with him.

Not that I am suggesting that the church in this wilderness is without God. She merely has to exist in Babylon's domain where she is persecuted but keeps the faith. In this her faith must remain untarnished (Heb 4 v 1 ff). Many failed the tests of the wilderness of Sinai.

Of the four persons I attempted to identify last time one remains, namely Michael (Rev 12 v 7). The name means "who is as God". Are we certain that this is the same person as spoken of in (Jude 9)? Our main source of information is of course from the book of Daniel (10 v 13 ff and Dan 12 v 1 ff).

I leave you for now to do some thinking for yourselves. Is there sufficient evidence to be conclusive and does it tell us anything about angels?

CHAPTER 26. Revelation 12 v 7

MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

For those who consider Heaven to be a place of total peace this passage must cause them to rethink. The character of Michael comes before us, and it means "who is like God" The name is used of ordinary men (Num 13 v 13, 1 Chron 5 v 13, 6 v 40, 12 v 20) and is not immediately explanatory of the person. In the same fashion you will see Jesus is also a common name in Israel (1 Sam 6 v 14: 18). Names are perhaps an expression of the parent's hopes and beliefs rather than the child's character. Perhaps for this reason God renames us (Rev 2 v 17).

Of the few references to Michael, we find one in (Jude 9). This passage calls him an Archangel and he is the only one named in scripture. Gabriel is an angel (Luke 1 v 19), Michael is head or chief angel (Jude 9), also found in a passage from the apocryphal "Assumption of Moses" where satan blasphemes Moses body calling him a murderer, referring to his killing of the Egyptian and Michael rebukes him. It is similar to (Zech 3 v 1 ff)

where satan is the accuser of the brethren.

This presents us with an interesting problem as to external authority and quotation incorporated into scripture. The Jews had many traditions, perhaps containing gems of truth, but also many fables. If Jude quotes a fable then what price inspiration? From Deuteronomy (34 v 5 - 6) it is said that no man knew where Moses was buried, so was man privy to the dispute? This gives us a few options:

1. Tradition was true and backed by inspiration
2. Jude is the first receptor of the information by direct Revelation
3. The passage has another meaning.

Another New Testament Apostolic Father in Shepherd of Hermas (Sim viii, iii, 3) calls Michael the "glorious angel" who has power over this people and governs them, for this is he who puts the law into those who believe. "Supposing the body of Moses" is a figurative expression? The body of Christ (1 Cor 12 v 27) is the Church. Is the body of Moses equivalent to the people of God under the Old Testament, or perhaps the Law? This may not seem relevant, but if the action of Michael is that of advocate for the people of God, then this elevates him (c.f. 1 John 2 v 1 ff).

In Daniel (chapter 10) the prophet is given a vision of God (Dan 10 v 6 c.f., Rev 1 v 12 - 15), an angel sets him upright (Dan 10 v 10 - 11) for he is sent of God. The prince of the kingdom of Persia had delayed this messenger for 21 days, but Michael one of the chief princes (Dan 10 v 13) came to his aid. Michael the prince is prince of Gods people (Dan 10 v 21). Just how much comfort to Daniel this would have been if Michael was an angel of limited power is questionable. The angel of the Lord smote a vast army in the days of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19 v 35).

We still have little information as to the person of Michael so we turn to (Daniel chapter 12), where it appears to speak about the last judgement (c.f. John 5 v 28 - 29). This would indicate that the "many" of (Daniel 12 v 2) is not a partial resurrection. In fact the scriptures do not teach a partial resurrection or two physical resurrections separated in time. Again the evidence as to who Michael is, is inconclusive.

Returning to our passage in (Jude 9) and making the assumption that "Michael the Archangel" is "Michael the Great Prince" and correlating this with 1 Thessalonians (4 v 15 - 16) we can identify Michael with the Lord or Christ Himself!

The victory of Michael (Rev 12 v 7) is the victory of Christ's blood (Rev 12 v 10 - 11) and further encourages this view. In John (12 v 31 ff) the death of Christ is linked to the casting out of satan.

We are still left with the question, what was satan doing in Heaven? We know that he was a regular in that great body (Job 2 v 1 ff). He appears as one who questions the integrity of the faith of men, basing their faith upon a false allegiance to God through the fear of personal suffering. This is a common view among many tribes of mankind who adopt a placatory kind of worship towards deity. Offering sacrifices to avoid the displeasure and wrath of divinity

(see worship of Moloch, the Romans and many eastern religions today). Satan from the beginning questions the motives of Jehovah (Gen 3 v 1 ff, cf v 5). The implication is that Jehovah had falsely limited the pleasure and autonomy of men by lying to them. In addition, the assault he launches tests the veracity of the Divine words (Matt 4 v 1 ff temptation in the wilderness).

Job in some measure vindicates God, but the test is cut short. The monumental test would be, what would God Himself suffer for His creatures. Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones in Romans, wrote a section on the cross, "the Vindication of God". In (Romans 5 v 5 ff) the love of God is set forth in His sacrifice for the unjust.

Apart from condemning fallen man as under sin and incapable of self-redemption, we see that the demands of righteousness are beyond the scope of mortals. If the devil was right in his assumptions, Jehovah merely gained pleasure from limiting and condemning man to a life of misery. If however, the Lord was prepared Himself to meet the demands of righteousness for mankind and gratuitously impute it to them, the devil is condemned for ever as the false party and accuser of the brethren.

It is therefore at this juncture, the cross, the death of the Son of God, that satan is disarmed forever. The cross brands satan as a liar and by the blood of Christ he is cast out. We must never be so parochial as to view this life as the only stage in creation. It is but a chamber of Gods operations. Our sphere in heaven is now made a great delight (Rev 12 v 12) since satan is cast out.

We are rapidly moving into the last phase, the final conflict. We take heart in this victory over satan which Paul says we shall soon consummate (Rom 16 v 20)!

CHAPTER 27. Revelation 12 v 13 - 18

Our last study concluded with a look at the fall of satan through the power of the blood of Christ. We now follow the fall of satan as he pursues the church into the desert. This parallels (Ex 19 v 4) and again repeats the typology (see also Deut 32 v 9 - 11). As the woman flees so satan casts a river after her. We notice that this river comes from his mouth (12 v 15). It is a flood upon the righteous, not dissimilar from the flood of Noah's day but it fails in its objective.

I will look no further than the contentions in the early church to see its effect. It involved a conspiracy to undermine the work of God (Acts 5 v 1 ff) and was particularly seen in the open conflicts with demons in the early church (Acts 19 v 11 ff). I see its major influence however in doctrinal assaults, since it flows from the mouth of satan. Paul warns the Corinthians of this danger (1 Cor 10 v 1 ff). Also we see very clearly among the churches of Revelation (Rev 3 v 9, Rev 2 v 9, Rev 2 v 20 cf v 24) that Judaism was the principle weapon by which the devil assaulted the infant church.

I have pointed out before that the major contentions in the New Testament are with Judaism, hence the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). This conflict enabled the church to clarify

and declare its position with respect to the effect of the gospel. Two major epistles are the result, Romans and Galatians. Paul saw that the false influence of ritualism was not unlike witchcraft (Gal 3 v 1 ff). Even mighty men like the Apostle Peter succumbed to its false teachings (Gal 2 v 11). What is surprising is that Paul himself did not go under, in view of his extreme Jewish upbringing (Gal 1 v 13 ff), but Peter despite his closeness to Christ did.

To what extent we now view the Earth helping the woman (Rev 12 v 16) depends upon our concept of prophecy and typology. There is a distinct parallel with (Ex 15 v 12) where God cut off the pursuit of Egypt by geographical means. Thus we particularly notice in the spread of the church away from the cultural centre of Judaism, Jerusalem on earth is spoken against with increasing disdain as the theme of the gospel is expounded (Gal 4 v 25). The church finds refuge in other lands, among other peoples, as the ripples of Christianity settle. The land men today call with reverence the Holy Land, is certainly not seen as such in the New Testament.

I am therefore suggesting that the earth helps to cut off the satanic influences that were particularly inherent in Judaism by giving her a large geographical community. I am not however suggesting that this cut off all of satan's influence. The war we are told continued with the remnant of the woman's seed (Rev 12 v 7). Here is where you and I find ourselves entering into the book of Revelation. I do not want to rush over this issue. We have just passed into a new solar year (Jan 5th 1986. Ed.) and men often review their conduct and make resolutions at such a time. The New Year, Yom Kippur was central to the Old Testament faith (Lev 16). This was a time of affliction of soul (Lev 23 v 27 Afflict = ענה = 'ânâh, to bow down hence afflict, not just fasting but the inward attitude that gives purpose to the outward abstinence).

Let us consider further that in this WAR there are lines of battle, a place where we stand and a place where the enemy stands. Are we know socialising with the enemy (remember Christmas in the trenches in 1914?). Do you seek the company of sinners for its own sake rather than for an opportunity to witness? Do you go to the extent of their excess? Are you impressed with their trivia, style and possessions? Do you confide in them? Well, what has happened to you? Remember Samson (Judges 16 v 20), he became bound up in the world and the world eventually bound him, he was blind to duty and was duly blinded.

Is your armoury in this war well prepared or is it getting rusty? Have you quit study? Have you quit self application? Are you now compartmentalised? You know what I mean, for example you want people to become disciples, but you will not discipline your family? You have developed two standards and an unjust balance, because you want to apply to others that which you will not apply to yourself. Beware of eclecticism! Mixed ideas!

Let us tighten our ranks and think of what I am going to say. I want you to question what battle lines you have drawn in your life, I want you to ask yourselves the boundaries that you will not cross?

1. Discipline/behaviour in the home. What will you fight and what will you accept?
2. Self discipline socially. How much will you eat and drink, what social

- intercourse, parties and company will you tolerate?
3. What media influence will you tolerate? When will you use the off button on the TV? (Today we might add social media, internet etc Ed.)
 4. At work where does business end and pleasure begin? Where do you turn your back? Are your reasons well considered?
 5. Why will you mix with unbelievers? What are your reasons?
 6. What are the purposes in your recreation?
 7. Dress. What image are you desiring to present?

CHAPTER 28. Revelation chapter 13

THE MUTANT (REV 13 V 1 - 9)

We are now going to classify the war machine that satan uses in the conflict against the children of God (Rev 12 v 17; 13 v 7). I will call it **the Mutant**. There is a remarkable similarity between our passage in Revelation and that in Daniel chapter 7. Let us make a brief comparison:

- (Dan 7 v 25: Rev 12 v 14)
- (Dan 7 v 2: Rev 13 v 1)
- (Dan 7 v 4, 5, 6: Rev 13 v 2)
- (Dan 7 v 7: Rev 13 v 1)
- (Dan 7 v 8: Rev 13 v 5)
- (Dan 7 v 21: Rev 13 v 7)
- (Dan 7 v 25: Rev 13 v 5).

I am going to suggest that the passages are synchronous, that is, they speak of the same things.

There is a Mutant right at the beginning of Daniel (2 v 31 - 36). The Mutant had considerable variations in its structure (gold to clay), which represented kingdoms (cf Dan 2 v 39), but overall it possessed a historic unity. The stone (Dan 2 v 45) was aimed at the destruction of the whole image and not just the feet. I suggest that the kingdoms are the same as in Daniel's vision (chapter 7 v 1). The eagle winged lion is a well known figure of Babylon (Dan 7 v 4) and the detail could be considered complete down to the 10 toes or horns of the fourth kingdom (Dan 7 v 7). The four beasts are four kings (Dan 7 v 17) which I suggest can be equivalent to kingdoms (Dan 8 v 21).

The conflict with the fourth beast (Dan 7 v 23 - 25) occurs during the period that we have already defined in Revelation.

Turning back to Revelation (chapter 13), we observe the elements of the beasts of Daniel (chapter 7) but now no longer seen individually but as a single Mutant. This should not cause us any problem of interpretation. Symbolism can indeed vary in the combination of its elements if only to confirm that it is symbolism. We saw the same in our study of the Cherubim as they appear throughout the Bible. We saw that their descriptions changed but their substance remained stable. So in Revelation we find the elements of Daniel's vision,

but formed slightly differently.

As in Daniel's vision the beast that John sees rises up out of the "sea", or as it is said in Daniel "the Great Sea" (Dan 7 v 2 - 3).

The "Sea" is quite plainly interpreted in Daniel (7 v 17). It is the earth, with all its seething and boiling humanity. Daniel's "diversity" (Dan 7 v 3) is in John (Revelation 13 v 1) a "unity". This is not difficult to see. It is a "unity" amongst "diversity" the same as Nebuchadnezzar's dream man. The "diversity" relates to its location, culture and time. Its "unity" relates to its origin and purpose. It is hell bent on destroying the people of God (Rev 13 v 7).

I point out as an aside, for your meditation, that it is remarkably similar to the Cherubim and is perhaps a false cherub.

The beast as it is called, has all the base elements of the image of God. Central to the mental process of king Nebuchadnezzar was a false concept of his position in the cosmic scale. He falsely elevated himself to the level of God! God scaled him down and revealed externally the beast within (Dan 4 v 32). This beast within is present in all humanist kingdoms so they all become symbolised as brutes (what does this say about human cultures?).

The motivation for the beast comes from the dragon (Rev 13 v 4) who is the Devil (Rev 12 v 9), who first appears in Genesis as the serpent. The curse upon the snake (Gen 3 v 14) perhaps illustrates the depth of disgrace in God's eyes, when one has yielded to the command of satan.

The statement of Revelation (chapter 13 v 4) is profound, and it is crucial that Christians grasp its meaning clearly. There is nothing good in absolute terms about the purposes of world governments, for all of their pronouncements. They may fight amongst themselves but this does not show any long term disunity. Germans and Japanese are happily welcome in our homes "vorsprung durch technik", Sony and Mitsubishi are back in the fold. World Wars, so called, are hiccups in the life of the beast, which refines its program and speeds its purpose which is to devalue the Kingdom of God. Who would have thought national enemies could so easily be reconciled. Nelson must turn in his grave at the thought of Napoleons children trekking across to England in a tunnel.

We are moving to a final phase of conflict which I shall show at another time God willing. Such a war will not kill Christians and pagans indiscriminately, it will be precise in its aim against Gods children.

For today we have seen the beast as an historic creature who became visible to the Saints of the Old Testament. This beast was not at all destroyed at the Crucifixion but continues to pursue its course in the New Testament (for the 42 months (Rev 13 v 5)).

The beast we shall see, is the foundation or perhaps motivation, of the scarlet woman, the whore of Babylon (Rev 17 v 3). This dragon is ultimately destroyed by Christ and when I see the image of our Lord upon this white horse (Rev 19 v 11), I wonder whether this gave rise to the legend of George and the Dragon?

Let me leave you with a summary of this study.

In our world there is no neutral ground. There is no benevolent regime. There is not an autonomous government. Russia and America are not separate in their purpose or ideology (at the time of writing the 'Cold War' had not ended. Ed.). Any good that is seen in rule among the kingdoms of men is a deceit to gain our trust. World government is united under satan, as his tool for the destruction of Christianity! The United States of America is doing perhaps more to destroy Christianity than these other regimes.

I want you as Christians to realise this fact and view the kingdom of men with ever growing suspicion and mistrust. Here is a blessing to you (Rev 1 v 3).

CHAPTER 29. Revelation chapter 13

Last time we saw that the features of the Beast were seen by Daniel (chapter 7). This Beast supports the kingdom of the scarlet woman (Rev 17 v 3 & 18) and is at war with the Kingdom of God (17 v 14). I want to tidy up some loose ends in this chapter.

In Daniel (chapter 7 v 17) we saw that the origin of the beasts was the earth (cf Dan 7 v 3, Rev 13 v 1). In Revelation (chapter 17 v 8) we note that the "Beast" hails from the ABYSS (see our studies Revelation chapter 9). In Revelation (chapter 9 v 1) we saw the star "having fallen", opening the abyss on earth. The star was satan (see notes ref ch 8 v 10, 9 v 1). The beast from the abyss wages war upon the law and the prophets (Rev 11 v 7 - 8).

Now if we are correct in assuming the Abyss and the Earth are located in the same place, relative to heaven we have two interesting lines of thought to pursue.

Firstly: Man is but a stride from the abode of the devil. He is not on an immediate plane as is often shown (above the pit but below heaven). A sort of halfway staging ground. The world is under a woe for satan lives amongst her (Rev 12 v 12), "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4 v 4).

Secondly: Satan is confined in the Abyss (Rev 20 v 1) for the 1000 years, where he cannot deceive the world. Does this mean that no working of evil can occur? The beast that we see in (Rev 13 v 2 - 3 ff) is the servant of the Dragon, even sitting upon the throne of satan (13 v 2). Why we might ask is satan not upon that throne? Why does not satan exercise power for himself? Perhaps because he cannot! In place of him, his creature carries on his black evangelism in his place. A creature that tolerates the gospel (Rev 11 v 7) but waits to annihilate true religion.

BLASPHEMY

In (Rev 13 v 1, 5, 6) the beast is covered in blasphemy and utters blasphemy. In other studies we have noted the abuse of language, misapplication and misrepresentation of language. Often people associate foul language (swearing) with blasphemy. Is this correct?

One derivation of the word Blasphemos is "Ballein tais phemais" (smiting with words). An example of this is (Matt 27 v 39 ff). It is possible for us to commit blasphemy in this form (Eph 4 v 31) and this I think is the sense in (Jude 9). Paul prior to conversion was a blasphemer (1 Tim 1 v 13).

In a more specific sense, blasphemy is the arrogation of the attributes of God Himself (Mark 2 v 5 - 7) (Luke 5 v 20 - 21). Jesus had not reviled God but spoken in the name or person of God. Blasphemy was thus the presumption of Divinity. I think that it is in this sense that the word is used in Revelation chapter 13. The kingdoms of men will all speak for God and claim the Divine right. All the heads have "names of blasphemy" (13 v 1), perhaps indicating that there are distinctions among them in the way that they abuse God. In our country God is invoked but not obeyed, indeed the arrogant presumptions of our police, judges and doctors show that they all play God in some way.

The seven heads and ten horns I take as symbolic numbers; seven indicates rest (6 days of creation, rest on the 7th day) and completeness, with ten the perfection or completeness of Divine order (10 commands). This beast is a pseudo God. From Revelation (ch 17 v 9 ff) we see that the bulk of his empire has passed away. Heads may fall but the beast lives on!

One of the heads is killed and is healed (ch 13 v 2). This shows us that when we speak of heads or kings (Rev 17) we are speaking of rule (kingdoms more properly). No earthly king other than Christ was raised from the dead and so we are not dealing with a person, rather a system.

I will make a guarded suggestion as to whom this could refer. In Revelation chapter 2 (v 9) we see the blasphemy of the Jews who were in reality satanists! We have here all the elements of the wounded head.

1. Blasphemy or arrogation of the Divine to which they had no right.
2. Satanists (see Rev 13 v 4) since they were organised by the devil.
3. The wound by which Judaism was rendered dead (Colossians 2 v 13 - 15).

Now Judaism (the religion of works) has many forms and allies. Catholicism is one, Mormonism is another. All are systems of works whereby men achieve reconciliation with God by supreme effort or magical interpretations. The Crucifixion was the death blow for all of this type of religion. It is obvious to us that we can do nothing to help ourselves get right with God and this is a central theme of the Cross. However the corpse of Judaism also rose from the dead and pervades all areas of society. It looks with mistrust upon the work of Christ and trusts to its own arm. This is a policy born out in our own nation, for example look at the range of non-Christian counselling centres (marriage guidance, pregnancy advisory, mental etc).

The beast as we discussed in closing last time, has vast power even to conquering the Saint (chapter 13 v 7). However, they may fall to his violence, but they do not bow the knee (Rev 13 v 8). Jesus gives them the greatest safeguard, a name in the book of life. They are elect.

How do you know if you are in that book? I leave you with one idea. Do you seek fellowship

with Gods people or avoid it? Do you speak OFTEN one to another or is this a matter of indifference or carelessness. God makes a note of our spiritual lives (Mal 3 v 16). These are treasured people and spared the wraths to come.

If ever there was a reason to strengthen your faith and fellowship, it is here with the prospect of violent persecution coming. Here is the endurance and faith of the Saints (Rev 13 v 10). What passed in the days of old, under Nero may turn out to be a picnic compared with the evil of the beast in our times. Remember, persecution is going on among Christians in other lands, so pray for them.

CHAPTER 30. Revelation chapter 13

A great failing of men, particularly the Christians is a literalist approach rather than a spiritual approach to prophecy. It was the expectation of the Jew that Elijah would return in the flesh (Matt 11 v 7 - 14, cf Malachi 4 v 5).

The parabolic nature of scripture is quite deliberate. It is very similar in operation to a computer software/hardware security system. It is almost complete, but lacks a special key to open it. The word is one part, the spiritual mind is the other part (1 Cor 2 v 14). No amount of exegesis, commentaries or careful sermons will open the truth of the word to a sinful mind. Jesus spoke in parables because He was addressing the faithful (Matt 13 v 10 ff).

Now I have mentioned this because in both these passages, Matthew chapter 11 (v 15 and Matt 13 v 9) the expression "he who has ears to hear, let him hear" occurs. It also occurs in Revelation 13 (v 9) and I think that the Holy Spirit would cause us to consider the spiritual import of the events before us.

We move on in our prophetic vision now to another (Gk. Allos = other of the same type) beast. One which exercises the authority of the Mutant we have already studied. We should not think that the Mutant is dead or has faded from history. The phrase "before it" (Rev 13 v 12) is not indicative of time past. It means "in its presence" (Gk. Enopion, literally "before its eyes", as in 13 v 14). This beast or power acts with the consent and with the pattern of all that has existed throughout history. Culturally it is full of the ancient paganism dressed up with acceptable modernism and technology. Modern mythology differs little from the ancient views of Greece or Babylon.

All systems of belief fundamentally strive to give meaning to life in terms consistent with its developed culture. Sci-fi always reflects the current technology, it would not mean much otherwise. The Greek culture for example reflected its view of creation, it saw chaos as the origin of ordered creation, as man is formed out of woman. This to them was a phase of growth. It did not define a pattern of continuity, but was something from which man could develop his own order. In this system homosexuality was seen as a legitimate form of order consistent with their starting point. It was to them improvement.

Modern culture may reject the cosmic views of the ancient Greeks, but it still exercises the same principles. It holds evolution as the chaotic starting point. From within this view it

believes that law and order are functions consistent with the process of evolution. Therefore whatever the latest view about what that benefit is becomes translated into a law of structure for the society. Hence the justification for abortion and other perverse practices. It all seems much more rational than the Greeks, but it is little different in practice. Indeed it seems almost right to the Christian, since it claims to be acting for the good of humanity. So it appears as a lamb, but listen carefully for it is the dragon (Rev 13 v 11).

As with all cultures it is not devoid of its miracle workers to enforce its regime. Back in Egypt, king Pharaoh had his own "trickers" (Ex 17 v 8 - 13). Nebuchadnezzar was surrounded by his own "trickers" (Dan 2 v 1 ff), just as this regime in (Rev 13 v 11) is given to do "tricks".

It must have seemed hard going to Moses when his miracle was imitated by the Egyptians. How often do we cry for the power to do exemplary signs and wonders to convince men of Gods power? How often those who have done such wonders have found them rationalised away as explicable by "science"?

Let us pause and think about this. Is the ability to do a sign a mark of creditability? Clearly not on the basis of the chapter before us. To Jesus a mark of creditability was the consistency with the works and the word of God (John 10 v 37 - 42). John the Baptist gathered the faithful without miracles.

Now I say this not to draw us away from miracles, but to show that they are one element of "creditability". The beast of Revelation chapter 13 does miracles, but leads away from true worship to a worship raised out of an ungodly culture (Rev 13 v 14 - 15). It further endeavours to make life impossible for those who will not accept its codes of ethics. Let us turn back to look at a familiar event in the life of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 3 v 1 - 7).

The "thin man" of Nebuchadnezzar was built upon the number 6. Only two dimensions 60 and 6 are given. Failure to fall down and worship it (Dan 3 v 6) meant destruction. This is the penalty for non-conformity to the "New Kingdom of Man" (Rev 13 v 15). This new beast has a new dimension for it is now 600, 60 and 6 (Rev 13 v 18). It far surpasses the golden nail of Nebuchadnezzar, imposing an effective "closed shop" (Rev 13 v 17) to force allegiance.

It is the ultimate welfare state which condones no life as being valid outside of its own rules. It has endeavoured to give life itself a totally new meaning. Life is obedience to satan. It would appear to function well in the sphere of economics (the realm of managing goods). The world is certainly moving into the realms of economic control made simple by the means of rapid communication (break down of Babel, Gen 11) and technology which removes the necessity for valuable means of trade (i.e.: gold), supplementing them by computer credit.

May I warn us all about debt while I am on this subject? This word is passing out of common usage. Today when you borrow money you are no longer incurring a debt. You are being given credit according to modern usage. The debtor is a servant to the lender (Prov 22 v 7). He is under an obligation. It may be that satan will employ this method to frustrate trade by increasing debt and withholding unless obedience is secured! It is not however all bad

news. In (Rev 18 v 10 ff) we see the collapse of the system in a very short space of time.

CHAPTER 31. Revelation chapter 14

Once again we find the 144,000 of Revelation that you will recall occurred in (Revelation chapter 7), in a similar position structurally. There it was after the 6th seal (Rev 6 v 12 ff) prior to judgement, here it is after the reign of the beast and prior to the fall of Babylon (cf Rev 14 v 6 - 8).

I will recap upon our ideas of the 144,000. There we saw them on Earth (Rev 7 v 1 - 3), here on Mount Zion (Rev 14 v 1). We considered the number as referring to the ELECT, the "all Israel" of (Rom 11 v 26) and the number 144,000 in consequence symbolic of a square and stable structure.

In our haste to expound or argue with scripture our big mistake is to neglect the context. Scripture displays the structure of the ordered mind of God (Is 28 v 23 - 29). It is possessed of Divine logic, no less so in prophecy. I will suggest to you that the 144,000 is not the theme of this early part of (ch 14). People who grasp and wrestle with the number here may lose the total message altogether. The substance of that message is gained by seeing the position and context of the passage.

I will pass on an observation which I hope will cease any arguments with the Jehovah's Witnesses. In their view the 144,000 consists of the literal number of men and women who will achieve heavenly status. Cast your eye on chapter 14 (v 4). In a literal sense this number consists only of men. How can women fulfil the literal sense of this passage? However under our symbolic approach it is a justifiable allusion to purity. I take it to parallel the Apostolic concept outlined in (2 Cor 11 v 2 ff and Eph 5 v 27). They are representative of all that is holy and good among men who have been redeemed. When I say men I mean of course mankind and so I include women.

I do not want to dwell upon the number any further. In view of its symbolic nature I would not construct a theology around it. Indeed, if I have the mind of the Lord here, I think that this is not the purpose for it being mentioned.

I have suggested that we find meaning in the context of the passage. That context is the career of the Beast (ch 13) and the power of evil as it deceives men. In chapter 13 (v 16 ff) we saw how satan would display his headship over men. They would receive his mark upon their heads. This group stands in distinct contrast to the servants of God who have a different mark (ch 14 v 1). It is perhaps from this passage that the practice of making the sign of the cross upon the heads of believers came. In Ezekiel (ch 9) we see God separating the faithful with His mark (9 v 4). The word for mark is תָּו = tâv and in its early written form was a cross. Do not for a moment though attempt to justify it as the instrument of palifixion. If we were to translate the thought into Greek we should use Omega (Ω), the corresponding final letter of the Greek alphabet.

The point is that this group, the 144,000 are marked by God. In addition, they are contrast by their worship. In Revelation chapter 13 (v 12) we have beast worship, in chapter 14 (v 3)

God worship. Beast worship conjures up its own type of resurrection (13 v 3, v 12) and uses it as a focus of its own movement. It raises up the glory of man and self justification. It unites man in his own selfishness. There is a program coming on the TV soon called Origins. It is in some respects unique. It appears to have a common substance and been translated into different languages around the world. It appears as if mankind has come to some consensus about his origins which overrides all cultural distinctions. This sort of thing must be expected and indeed will become increasingly more common towards the end of history. Men will be deceived (Rev 13 v 14) and will follow the motivation of the beast.

For us our Resurrection focus is in heaven ((Rev 14 v 3) the throne (cf Rev 5 v 6) of the Lamb. Our new nature will only find its perfect expression in the abode of the Lamb. We do not glorify man or the creature more than the Creator. We do not worship self, but He who made us. I wonder whether David's apprehension of heaven led him to play the harp (1 Sam 16 v 14 ff). Such music itself drove the devil away, perhaps because such praise to the Almighty God was insufferable to satan.

In the culmination of Psalms (149) we see the call for a new song. Such songs rejoice not merely in salvation, but in Divine justice (149 v 6 ff). This song is further elucidated upon in Revelation chapter 15 (v 2 - 3), where the context further confirms our approach of looking at the difference between the two camps. The song of Moses (Ex 15 v 1 ff) was delivered after the Exodus and proclaims Gods mighty power to save and as we saw even there, Moses did not see it as complete until heaven itself was reached (15 v 16 - 17). Here we have with Moses, reached heaven.

There is a well founded but sometimes comical view of heaven beyond the pearly gates, as a place where you pick up a harp and float upon a cloud!! You will most certainly sing with the harps, but no idle song. You will sing of great works and mighty deeds. Not of mere mortals but of God Himself.

It is a measure of your preparation for this, whether you delight to praise God. Has it become a chore? Can you only sing when others sing? Do you merely sing the idle songs of men and trivial acts of mortals in pop songs? Musical taste if it develops should develop ultimately in religious expression towards God.

CHAPTER 32. Revelation chapter 14

We saw the significance of the 144,000 in its contrast with the root of mankind who carry the mark of the Beast. A mark of these 144,000 is that they are not liars. There is no guile in them. There is no virtue in truth that is merely acknowledged, the virtue is in practising truth. We should take this to our hearts. There is the dangers of group pressure that leads us to compromise, denial and falsehood. A classic example was Peter (Matt 26 v 69 - 75)! It is a measure of our own consciousness of God. Sometimes in our own minds we make men bigger than God or we make the words of men bigger than God. When we do this we have shifted our camp and are among those who worship the beast.

Paul calls it "witchcraft" (Gal 3 v 1 ff). Do not forget what I told you about the devil stealing the word of God from your minds!

John now takes us in his vision towards the great judgement (v7 κρίσις = krisis). This is the ultimate crisis for mankind. Every day we read and hear of crisis in the world. Oil crisis, monetary crisis, political crisis etc. Man sees his end in every way other than that which it will be. The cause of this crisis is the Gospel. The gospel will bring men to judgement. This is what Paul says in Romans (1 v 16 - 18). It is a legal process by which we break up all of the defences of satan that he plants in the human soul. (2 Cor 10 v 2 - 5). Evangelism is not giving people a hope that they can maintain false practice, humanism and disobedience and still we have a place in heaven. Evangelism is the process which brings pain and sorrow and hopelessness in the sinner, leading to a great quiet (2 Cor 7 v 9 - 10).

The gospel when truly preached is not a happy message. It may result in happiness, but either way its purpose is to condemn sin and bring judgement. You may have the crisis now or later. If it is later it may be too late.

The ultimate crisis is preceded by the collapse of society (Rev 14 v 8). This is taken up in more detail in (Rev 18 v 1ff). Let us as Saints never forget in all of the apparent joys and companionship of this world that they are all part of the working out of Evil. The companies we work for, the people we mix with at work are not subjects of God. Our involvement is but for a time and we must keep reminding ourselves that it must collapse and be swept away. Do you rejoice in that or does it grieve you? (see Rev 18 v 20).

Contemporary Christianity is synthesising with the world. That is one reason that it does not view hell in a biblical way. It does not want hell to be a severe place. That I think is because it has lost sight of the magnitude of sin and if it had its own way would let mankind off with a caution.

God does not see it that way! I do not say that He takes a cruel pleasure in His judgement. It is part of His nature which demands justice and retribution. He torments His enemies (Rev 14 v 10). It is not a passive activity. It is a deliberate act. (Matt 25 v 24 - 30), and it is well merited. Young, old, babes, youths, men and aged who are not "born again" remain "unborn" in spiritual terms is to be labelled "consigned to the fire". Our emotions try to resist this, they call us to doubt our God and question His love. When we do this we are looking at love in humanistic terms. In fact, when these emotions arise we must see that we have lost sight not of the love of God, but our love for God. We can never question His purpose (Rom 9 v 19 - 23).

The love of God is bound up in the framework of His law word. We must judge all love in terms of its conformity to the Holy word. Many of the residents of hell were kind and good, seemingly harmless people. They all have this in common, that they did not serve God in truth.

The world is gradually ripening towards this judgement. We live in a troubled world, an afflicted world! For this reason John calls us to endure or be patient (Rev 14 v 12, 13 v 10). We must accept the things that happen, but keep the faith. What is it that works patience

(endurance)? It is tribulation (Rom 5 v 3) and of course it does not end there (Rom 5 v 4 ff). We are coming out of tribulation (Rev 7 v 14). It is only these who die in the Lord (Rev 14 v 13) that ultimately will attain rest.

So we have a contrast again, as we did with the 144,000 and their worship and the beast and his worshippers. It is now a contrast in their final state. The sinners are not at rest (Rev 14 v 10 - 11) and the Saint is at rest (Rev 14 v 13). Now I do not think that we should consider this rest as inactivity. The context should make that clear. The Saints have been in a time of trouble (tribulation). So I view the rest as a deliverance from all troubles.

The Thessalonians as has been pointed out in another ministry, were troubled (2 Thess 1 v 4). However they would get rest from that tribulation! (2 Thess 1 v 6 - 7).

This is why I like to get away from work and home and go on a holiday. "Troubles are out of reach". The pressures of daily life are not immediate. When you go on your holidays think of this, the relief the drop in tension with each mile you travel. That is perhaps why people relax and appear different when they go on holiday.

When Jesus comes it will be like going on holiday. We shall rest and our baggage (works) shall follow on (Rev 14 v 13). We shall have all the pressures and afflictions of this life removed. This will add to our joy and happiness and in that rest we shall enter upon new activities. R.I.P means activity!

But for those who spent their lives and their times troubling us, they in turn shall be troubled. Anguish at every turn. Every day of Eternity will be the worst day of their existence. No joy, only sorrow.

John speaks, then here of a role reversal and this is exactly what Jesus taught (Luke 16 v 24 - 26).

CHAPTER 33. Revelation chapter 14 verses 14 - 20

We have arrived at the time of judgement and we notice that it is divided into two parts.

1. The harvest (v 14- 16) and
2. The vintage (v 17 - 20).

I will suggest that one relates to the believer and the other to the unbeliever. The word harvest (θερισμός = therismos) comes from the Greek word for summer. This is the common usage (Matt 6 v 24). In a spiritual sense harvest is a function of the church (Matt 9 v 37 - 38) and as such is an ongoing affair. It was a part of Jesus' ministry (Luke 3 v 16 - 17). At the same time we also see that the work of judgement is also an ongoing affair. However there is coming a day when God shall make a total end of all the works of man, not just individually, but also collectively.

For the believer (and also the unbeliever) there is a reaping in this life, that is when we

believe (we are reaped) and a sowing in death from which we are again reaped (1 Cor 15 v 35 ff). In order to do this there is a need for a general resurrection (1 Cor 15 v 51 ff). I take the events before us in Revelation to refer to this final harvest of all the dead and the living together. This is spoken of by Paul in (1 Thess 4 v 14 - 18). These as Paul points out are words of great encouragement.

Effectively, the book of Revelation could end here, but it does not because it is the desire of the Spirit to put more flesh on the bones and so we shall see some of the events that we have already studied in more detail, to impress our minds more fully and perhaps also by way of repetition, stress the importance of the subject matter before us. So later on we shall again come to what I believe is the "Last Judgement" (Rev 20 v 11 - 15) where the attention moves from the reaping to the quality of the harvest, the individuals that are reaped.

I will not speculate on the metaphysics of this event. How God will reconstruct the individual or from what substance he will assemble them (the sinner has a resurrection body with different properties). I trust He will do so with that great ease of perfection that will make it seem to us a most natural and wonderful occasion. One that will neither frighten nor confuse us despite, the grandeur of the whole occasion.

It would appear here that the Saints are gathered before the unbelievers and this appears at variance with another scripture relating to the parable of the Kingdom (Matt 13 v 24 ff, cf v 30). "First" it says, gather the tares! The events are I believe synchronous, but primarily the direction towards the tares in (Matt 13) is a warning to all sinners that there is no escape, neither are they left to themselves on earth relieved of the Saints. In Revelation there is no contradiction with (Matt 13). The mention of the Saint first is perhaps for emphasis of Gods care. This book is for the believer not the unbeliever. Secondly, having lastly spoken of the crushing of the grapes is a natural opener for the remaining chapter of judgement.

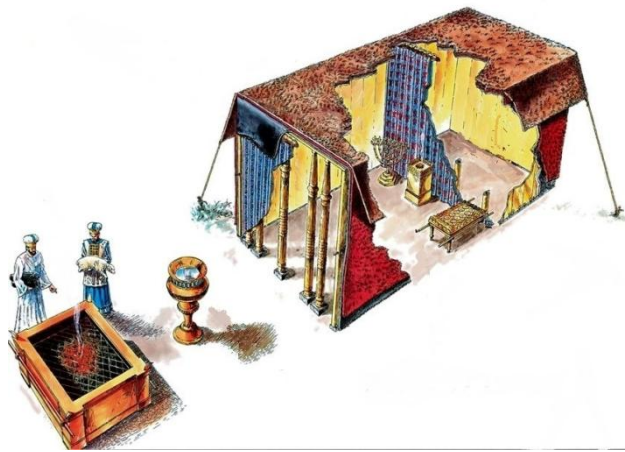
Let us make some detailed observations as we close this section. To help us, I have brought out our model of the Tabernacle since the verses contain direct references to this structure.

In (v 15) the voice comes out of the shrine (naos), not the temple (hieros) but the holy place, as in (John 2 v 19). This shrine had a dividing veil, between the outer sanctuary and this was torn when Jesus expired (Matt 27 v 51) signifying the opening up of the way to the holy of holies previously given only to the high priest.



Within the holy of holies was the mercy seat with the Cherubim overshadowing and it was above this that God dwelt and from here that God spoke (Ex 25 v 22). This becomes the focus of the nation and the place of meditation (Rom 3 v 24 - 25) where blood was sprinkled on the day of Atonement (cf Lev

16).



Since this is the place where God addresses His people, I take it that the call is to Christ upon the cloud (Rev 14 v 14). He receives this call from the Father to gather His people.

The other reaper receives his call from the altar of the burnt offering (14 v 18 *θυσιαστήριον* = *thusiastērion*). This was the place where sin was confessed and guilt openly acknowledged. It was the place of death where the individual

sacrificed an animal to the Lord according to a scale of sin (see Lev 1 - 6). Although the animal was a substitute, the sinner must have realised that he himself was the true victim of the flames of judgement.

So in another sense the altar came to represent the place of commitment. Total dedication of the whole man, just as we see in Paul's association of baptism and burial in (Romans 6). We do not just bury an arm or a leg, we bury the whole body. (Hence the need to signify baptism by total immersion rather than sprinkling the head).

Paul demands this life on an altar in (Rom 12 v 1 - 2) and in (Revelation 6 v 9) we saw the Saints under the altar, crying for judgement. This cry is now answered (Rev 14 v 18) and the Saints are thus avenged.

The grapes of wrath are crushed in the wine press (cf Isaiah 63) and their blood flows deeply out. The number 1600 (furlongs an old measure "furrow length") is a multiple of 4 X 4 and 10 X 10, possibly signifying the global scale by the figure 4 and the judgement by the figure 10. God's judgement is universal and according to law.

The blood flows up to the bridles of the horses (Rev 14 v 20). These might be the horses of (Rev 19 v 11 ff), in which case we are left with another vision of God and His army wallowing in the blood of His enemies. God will utterly decimate sinners. The picture also gives us an indication of the depth of sin in human society!

CHAPTER 34. Revelation chapter 15

In some respects John is like a story teller who pushes on to the main point and then returns to fill in more detail. Hence we have been to see the last judgement within its harvest, and now we turn to look back at details of events preceding the judgement.

The scene he gives us is paralleled in the Old Testament. This is a great help to us in remembering facts about scripture since it reduces and coheres the amount of information we have to store. I refer of course to Moses in Egypt. There we had plagues, a sea,

deliverance and a song.

The plagues upon men are not designed to soften them up but to harden them (Ex 4 v 21)(Ex 7 v 2 - 4, v 13). I would go further and suggest that the greater effect is upon the believers. It reveals to the Saints the scope of Gods sovereign power in creation over animals and weather (cf 10 Plagues) and particularly mankind. It leads the believer down that mental pathway into the ultimate contradiction. "Am I truly free?" I surely have some input into the direction of life? No says Paul (Rom 9 v 14). God does not just watch over you, He guides and directs your every action (Eph 2 v 10).

The ultimate challenge to you is to submit the last vestiges of pride and chase that tiny demon of self from the recess of your soul. You are not your own (1 Cor 6 v 20).

It was at this point, devoid of any resources that the Lord brought Israel to the brink of helplessness in order to "stand still and see the salvation of Jehovah" (Ex 14 v 13). (cf Heb 12 v 1).

Water is one of the great natural barriers to man's mobility! (This is still spiritually true of baptism!). It is not then difficult to see how Paul picks this idea up in Corinthians (1 Cor 10 v 1 - 2 ff). It is also the transition point from one life (in Egypt) to the life of a pilgrim. Water becomes a dividing line between two lives and so is very much like a grave, we have buried the "old man" and shed his skin as a caterpillar to a butterfly (Col 3 v 9). Hence we are not surprised to see the figure of baptism associated with a funeral (Rom 6 v 3 - 6). The "old man" is dead (6 v 6).

So Moses and we the Israel of God, for so we are named (Gal 6 v 16) must cross the water barrier and reach the other side even as Noah did (1 Peter 3 v 18 ff). And in that crossing over God performs His judgement upon ungodliness. We now stand on the other side of the sea (Ex 14 v 29 - 31).

This sea here in Revelation is called crystal, *Rev 4:6 And before the throne there was a **sea of glass like unto crystal**: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.* The sea is symbolic of nations or the earth as we saw in (Rev 13 v 1 and Dan 7 v 7). It is a fitting metaphor, containing all of the imagery of turmoil, powers, destruction, treachery etc (one minute calm next minute raging). Dark and impenetrable. From God's point of view this is not so. If the crystal sea reflects the idea of humanity under Gods feet it looks different from heavens view point. It is ordered and calm, it is under control with nothing hidden.

When we enter the Kingdom of God, we stand with Him upon this sea. Our world view changes (2 Pet 3 v 4). We see more, understand more. The world is no longer without meaning, life has order, structure and government. These facts appear to us when we make that journey from death to life when we pass out of that sea. No more uncertainty.

We therefore sing our hearts out with a song that is old (Ex 15) and new (Rev 15 v 3) the song of Moses is the song of the Lamb. Moses, as we were at pains to point out recently, looked far beyond Canaan (Ex 15 v 16 - 18) to a home in heaven. The song he sang on the

edge of the red sea is the song that he sings with Christ on the crystal sea in glory. Here Moses sees the fulfilment of his mission (the law and Christ united).

Our final images from (revelation 15) are the plagues from the temple (naos) more correctly shrine. The plagues come from the holy place.

Superficially this passage (Rev 15 v 5 - 8) might indicate that no one could obtain the full benefit from the work of Christ until the completion of the plagues. This idea is clearly refuted from (Hebrews 10 cf v 19 ff).

A passage in the Old Testament which seems to relate is found in (1 Kings 8 v 10 - 12). The ark was brought into the Temple and the priests were driven out by the glory of God. It was an act of dedication or consecration. The ark was home at last. So too Christ having ministered sat down at the right hand of God (Heb 10 v 12).

This ministering in heaven is spoken of earlier in (Hebrews 9 v 23 ff). Christ displaces the ritual of the Old Testament by His perfect and better sacrifice. This was prefigured in Solomon's time when the ark entered the temple and the priests were displaced!

Now there is also the further thought that must accompany this. God's judgement and fury must be appeased before a perfect fellowship can be constituted. Today men think that God lives in a building, collecting "sixpences" in little bags and is delighted to have sinners visit Him and sing a few songs and make a few gestures. This could not be further from the truth. God will not allow and access into His presence without the demands of justice, the satisfaction of wrath and the sprinkling of blood.

The church buildings are quite often a testimony of failure. Man has to create a place for God to live because he cannot get into where God truly lives, because man will not accept Gods terms.

CHAPTER 35. Revelation - continued

We take up our study at a convenient place, reviewing the judgements of God again, seen here under the symbol of the bowls. These follow a similar pattern to the trumpets as you will see from our chart. Bowl (φιάλη = phialē) is used in the LXX in (Exodus 27 v 3) for the basins (from מִזְרָק = mizrâq, to sprinkle). These we the bowls into which the blood of the sacrifices was received that it might be sprinkled upon the people and the horns of the altar. In (Rev 16) it has a sanctifying effect, but it separates mankind to judgement.

The judgements are similar to those seen in Egypt at the time of Pharaoh (Ex 7 v 14), but do we take them literally?

Our minds are ever ready to jump into speculation mode. Could (Rev 16 v 2) be talking about A.I.D.S? Could (Rev 16 v 3) be "acid rain" and the Chernobyl fall out? Hold your hand! Despite the ease with which this sort of teaching is received (see for example the speculative work of Hal Lindsay on this in chapter 16 of Revelation - Late Great Planet Earth

p 81 ch 7 ff) it is not clear as to the method of interpretation .

Well there are some strange coincidences, like the Jehovah's Witnesses picking 1914 as a significant year. But since speculation throws many dates at life's board it is not surprising to see some hit significant dates! Looking however at the overall teaching and methods of the Jehovah's Witnesses or Russellites we see more misses than hits.

Revelation we must not forget is a book of symbolic language (cf Rev 5 v 6 as a description of Christ). The symbols express attributes or powers such as the Four Horsemen (Rev 6) symbolising Christ's government over mankind. These horses and riders appeared in the Old Testament (Zech 6 v 1 - 8) "walking through the Earth". But who we ask has seen them in the flesh?

I will therefore in the approach to get an understanding of Revelation chapter 16 look for principles with a spiritual rather than temporal emphasis. We shall try to find moral principles at work. (Although these are doubtless outward effects).

As a generalisation God's wrath is aimed at the whole realm of man, earth, sea and sky, the place where man should have exercised Godly dominion (Gen 1 v 28-29). The wrath of God is specifically laid upon those who follow Satan (Rev 16 v 2). While sin brings to some punishment in this life, it is nothing compared with the final judgement of God.

We saw that the mark of the beast was given as a mark of satanic warfare (Rev 13 v 16). Humanist states will protect the sinner as does our own society, God of course has His mark on the forehead of believers (Rev 14 v 1). This is reminiscent of the High Priests mark (Ex 28 v 36 - 38), which enabled him to function acceptably in God's presence. However there is also a mark that God can give man as a token of his separation i.e. Leprosy (Lev 13). In crying "unclean" (Lev 13 v 46) the leper was merely reiterating the pronouncement of God upon him. God had declared him unclean.

Likewise when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant God smote the uncircumcised with piles (1 Sam 5 v 6 - 12).

In (Rev 16 v 2) we see the non-Christian suffer for his allegiance to Satan!

The pollution of the waters (16 v 3 - 7) recalls the first and second plagues of Egypt (Ex 7 v 17 cf Ex 8 v 2). The Nile for the Egyptians was the sacred river and source of life. A whole culture had blossomed along its banks. That which the Egyptians relied upon became their destruction. In a like manner God will bruise and bleed all which unregenerate man pins his hopes upon. Comparing this section with (Rev ch 8) you might think that we are dealing with different judgements, since there a 1/3rd is mentioned. I draw your attention back to that study (Chapter 19) where we considered the 1/3rd as the cursed portion of the second born (Deut 21 v 17).

The Sun is next caused to give distress upon the unrepentant. In (Gen 1 v 15) the Sun was given to regulate worship and as such is a symbol of the Lord Christ (Malachi 4 v 2). The Psalmist describes him as a bride groom (Psalm 19 v 4 - 6) coming from his chamber.

Man has grown dull to the glory of God declared in the heavens (temporal and spiritual). Even under glaring provocation he refuses to glory in his Creator, but utters sullen curses (Rev 16 v 8 -9).

This is a declaration of the hardness of mans heart. Just as the progressive plagues in Egypt declared Pharaoh as utterly hardened.

So we see the whole domain of man under satan given to the wrath of God. We now see the kingdom of the beast given over to wrath. The 9th plague of Egypt is a plague of darkness (Exodus 10 v 22). This gave Israel respite from the Egyptians (Ex 10 v 23), but strangely did not cause any inconvenience to Israel (Ex 10 v 23). They had light in their dwellings. Again we see that God's plagues are not directed at His people, but afford the benefit. The throne of satan is often close to Gods people (cf Rev 2 v 13 at Pergamos).

I would not say that these plagues are specifically reserved for the end of the world, but they can be poured upon all generations. In the Old Testament we see judgements, plagues, apostasy and the working of evil in every generation. I see no reason why this should be any different now. The plagues come from the heavenly tabernacle (Rev 15 v 5). Hebrews tells us that under the Old Testament the holy of Holies was inaccessible (Heb 9 v 8). Through Christ it is opened (Heb 9 v 12) (Heb 9 v 24). Through Christ we enter also (Heb 10 v 19). From (Rev 15 v 8) we see that God had first to vent His wrath over evil on the road to final judgements. This is seen at Pentecost (Acts 2 v 19 - 21) and confirmed by Jesus - "I beheld satan falling" (Luke 10 v 18), "Now is the prince of this world cast out" (John 12 v 31). Access is granted after the judgements are poured.

We are a world undergoing judgement not merely waiting for it. The mystery of iniquity is at work as is the conflict against principalities and powers. We are on the door step of the second coming.

Next Harmageddon - but where are the Hars?

CHAPTER 36. Revelation 16 v 12 - 16.

HARMAGGEDON - NO CONTEST.

We come to a passage in scripture where one word has been used as a frightening symbol of the destruction of man - Armageddon. It has become part of journalisms vocabulary to describe Holocaust and debased to picture a war between man and man. This is not the position we can arrive at from an examination of the book of Revelation.

I am loathe to introduce new and unrelated images into this study as some do. Rather I wish to harmonise the image present. Let us start with the concept of war. In (Rev 12 v 9) we learn that satan was cast out into the world following the war in heaven (cf John 12 v 31). That war has been waged to this day on Earth by the people of God (Rev 12 v 17). You may recall that I asked you what part you were playing in that war. I am an armourer. I supply

weapons, but I get the impression that some of you are loathe to look after them!

That war we fight is spiritual (Eph 6 v 12, 1 Tim 6 v 12 (a), 2 Tim 4 v 7). There is no indication that we have a physical war in this life. There is no indication that our spiritual war will culminate in a physical war (cf 2 Thess 2 v 8).

In the light of this I cannot conceive Armageddon as a physical battle. The weapons of our warfare are spiritual (2 Cor 10 v 3 - 5) (Eph 6 v 14 - 17). Christ too enters the final conflict with the same weapons (Rev 19 v 11 - 16, cf v 21). The sword of His mouth kills men. Was not this so with Adam? This Armageddon is not a third world war, it is the final religious conflict between Christ and the unbeliever.

I will also draw your attention to the fact that woman went into the wilderness, the Church in the wilderness (Rev 12 v 14) which parallels the Old Testament march to Canaan, the promised land. But in this wilderness we find Babylon the Great, (Rev 17 v 3) her enemy. She is depicted as a woman, the harlot and as such is the symbol of all false religion (Rev 17 v 4 - 5). She is depicted as sitting upon many waters in the wilderness (Rev 17 v 1). We are not left to guess what the waters are. They are the peoples of the world (Rev 17 v 15). In this we see the peoples of the world subject to the false church, the harlot.

I take the waters that pursue the true church in (Rev 12 v 15) spewing from Satan's mouth as indicating the people of the world under Satan's direction, pursuing the church of God. They are foiled because the earth swallows them (Rev 12 v 16). This was the punishment upon the ungodly that stood against God (Num 16 v 29 - 33). In Eden God used the earth as a weapon against sinners (Gen 3 v 17 - 18). Creation itself fights against the ungodly (cf Judges 5 v 20).

Turning back to Revelation chapter 16 we see the work of God unfolding upon the men of this world. The great river Euphrates upon which Babylon sat is dried up (Rev 16 v 12). Euphrates was one of the boundaries of the earthly Kingdom of God (Rev 15 v 18 - 21). Here I take it to be the symbolic of the "many waters" of (Rev 17 v 1). In practical terms the river stands as an obstacle to the full expression of our faith. As long as those people have power we experience limitations to the full experience of the Kingdom of God in all of its righteousness.

The Lord thus prepares the removal of the waters, just as the earth swallows them up and they are denied. In this same symbol we can see the boundaries opened up to allow the final culmination of the conflict with evil to occur. The kings from the east moved by the foul spirits are then gathered to the battle (Rev 16 v 14 cf Rev 17 v 12 - 14). Note that the evil people of this world have the power to work miracles and signs!

In the battle Christ defeats them (Rev 9 v 19 - 21) and the place is called Armageddon. The old fortress city Megiddo lay on the Fertile Crescent route to Babylon (see accompanying map). The Hebrew means the place of multitudes (מִגְדּוֹ = *gâdad*, to crowd in great numbers in one place). In the Old Testament it lay on the plain of Esdraelon and so the term Har-mountain cannot connect us to the literal location on earth. It is I suggest a symbol of the high places of God, but by the name drawn to bring us to consider the events connected

with Megiddo the fortress.

In the days of Deborah the oppressed Israel were delivered by God at Meggido (cf Judges 5 v 19 - 21).

Armageddon then stands as the place of conflict between the Lord and His people and the rulers of the earth. Josiah the king of Israel anticipated the battle but found himself fighting against God (2 Chron 35 v 20 - 24). He was too soon! I point this out, because it is an interesting mark of Gods goodness to king Josiah. Josiah was a good man, surely he did not deserve to die thus? Yet it was because of his goodness that God took him at Megiddo (2 Kings 22 v 19 -20). Josiah was by this spared from seeing the following decline of the nation.

Truly our ideas of the goodness of God are often removed from the true nature of the goodness of God! The lesson is that many temporal suffering is a mark of the goodness of God sparing us from the extended suffering of this life.

At the battle of Armageddon we are on the Lords side. We walk in clean garments (Rev 16 v 15). I am reminded that in the Royal Navy, that prior to battle the men washed and put on clean clothes. Why do you think that was?

Perhaps we have not made a spectacular display in this exposition but I believe we have made an honest attempt to confine our speculation to the pages of scripture. May the Lord bless His word - Amen!

CHAPTER 37. Revelation chapter 17

THE FALL OF BABYLON

Before we examine the fall of Babylon I want to go back a little and put in perspective the devils trinity. That is the Dragon, the Beast and the Whore. The dragon is the devil (Rev 12 v 9) the false god. The `beast, which we also called the Mutant, is the synthesis of world powers and appeared in (Daniel 7) and again in (Rev 13 v 1 ff). The beast gets its power from satan (Rev 13 v 2) and pursues its career for 42 months (Rev 13 v 5) which is the period of persecution for the church (Rev 12 v 14) [see our time structure 3 1/2 years, 42 months, time, time, 1/2 time].

This beast is not a single nation but a world power (Rev 13 v 7 -8). We do not look for our enemies in a single nation such as Russia or America or China etc. Outwardly while there appears to be a fundamental difference in ideology between the nations of the world there is according to scripture an underlying unity. The unifying force or rather person is the devil. When it comes down to serving or rather not serving God, the world powers are in total agreement. This was perceived at the Crucifixion (Acts 4 v 25 - 28). The warring factions joined hands against God and put their differences aside (Luke 23 v 12).

Ideologies are but expressions of human autonomy or independence. Self will express itself in different ways according to its cultural heritage. One form of self expression

(communism) will argue against another form of self expression (capitalism), but both will unite against Christ and His kingdom, because Christ attacks their root of self. Christ says you have no right to think apart from me and my law. At this attack on their foundation, they will unite, merely to preserve that self expression and independence from God.

This was the problem in the Garden of Eden, when the dragon put it into Adam and Eve's minds that they could be independent from God and survive. They would be gods in their own right (Gen 3 v 5).

There are then only two types of people in this world, the believer and the unbeliever. The unbeliever, whatever his culture, ideology or creed worships satan's beast. The word worship (προσκυνέω = proskuneō, meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand, so crawling or fawning as a dog before its master). The sinners are the devils lap dog (Rev 13 v 8).

This is worth considering for its practical import. It explains why unregenerate men, whatever nation they are from, worship! It also explains why there is no difference in their objects of veneration. Even though the form or expression of their worship differs outwardly. They worship because satan makes them (Rev 13 v 8) and they worship satan through the beast (Rev 13 v 8). The unregenerate man who goes to the Anglican Church or the Catholic Church thinks that he is worshipping God. Since he has no intention of serving God in the appointed way, they are thieves (see John 10) worshipping a god of their own making. They do not differ in this way from Hindus or Communists etc.

We must consider worship as it applies to Christendom. We are often led to ask "which church is right?" The answer is plainly not in the outward expressions i.e. Baptist, Evangelical, Pentecostal etc⁴. It is not a question of "which church is right?", it is "what people are redeemed?" The woman at Sychar (John 4 v 5) asked Jesus in effect, "which church is right?" (John 4 v 20). It came down to individuals not churches. It was a matter of what people worshipped God truly in spirit. Only people who are redeemed could do this (Heb 12 v 22). The true church does not exist on earth but in heaven.

Now what is the relationship of the whore of Babylon to the dragon and the beast? The woman sits upon many waters (Rev 17 v 1) symbolic of the nations of the earth (Rev 17 v 15). But also she is seen sitting upon the beast (Rev 17 v 3 cf Rev 13 v 1). The waters and the beast are one substance as we have seen; the beast is composed of the powers of nations.

The woman sitting on the beast is also called a great city (Rev 17 v 18), king of kings of the earth. (Luke 22 v 25). The idea of kingship is the exercise of authority.

Babylon was founded in an attempt by men to unify themselves against God lest they lost their identity (Gen 11 v 4). It was at Babel (Babylon) that God struck His blow to break up and confound mans puny attempt at resistance (Gen 11 v 9). Babel was in part a symbol, a city (Gen 11 v 4), the symbol of the combined authority and power of man. The kings of the

⁴ These are all "denominations" or divisions. They are attempts to express what the church is but they fail because they lack authority from God. They are human inventions.

earth came together under this one unifying symbol of resistance to God.

For the Christian God reversed the process of disunity at Pentecost (Acts 2 v 5) through the power of His spirit, drawing men together in Christ. The church has many voices but one tongue.

So Babylon the whore, is a symbol of the dream of man, the false church. She is dependent upon the beast (Rev 17 v 3) for her existence and to her, kings of the earth (civil government) lend their strength and substance still striving for the dream of Nimrod the hunter, a one world power. American Imperialism, Soviet Expansionism, Western Capitalism still strive towards a unified world. The United Nations, the League of Nations, the Eastern Block all push for a one world power, the whore of Babylon. They will cast their crowns anywhere other than at the feet of Jesus.

So we have set the stage for the conflict. The dragon satan empowers the beast who in turn glorifies satan by submitting to satan's dream of a one world power to fight the almighty. It is the total opposite of Christ who empowers the church to realise the dream of the Kingdom of God.

Just what happens to this unholy trinity we shall see next time!

CHAPTER 38. Revelation chapter 17

In our last study we looked at the unholy trinity of the dragon, the beast and the whore of Babylon, so that we might identify them. Now we look to their downfall. I refer you back to structure 1 (Chapter 4) of our notes where I suggested that chapters 17 to 20 look at the judgement of these three. The judgement proceeds in reverse order. (Rev 18 v 1 - 24) the fall of the whore (cf Rev 18 v 21). (Rev 19 v 11 - 21) the fall of the beast (cf Rev 19 v 20). (Rev 20 v 1 - 10) the fall of satan (cf Rev 20 v 10). All three are burned (Rev 18 v 18, Rev 19 v 20, Rev 20 v 10).

There is a particular element of life associated with the Whore of Babylon and that relates to economics (Rev 17 v 4, 18 v 3, 9, 11 - 14). This realm is associated with the beast (Rev 13 v 16).

The failure of the churches to come to grips with Christian economics is perhaps part of the purpose of God in enabling the "Whore" to flourish. It is at the root of her power over men. There are very few common denominators among men, but trade is one of them. From earliest times nations were linked by trade routes (Gen 37 v 25) although they were isolated in ideologies trade opened up the world and incidentally allowed the gospel to spread along its trade routes (Jonah 1 v 5, Acts 27 v 1 - 2). You can be sure that these were not charter or holiday cruises, but the means of making money.

Trade barriers have been at the root of much of mans conflict. For example, the Moslem Empire standing at the crossroads to the east posed a trade rather than a religious threat. There is no doubt that science, art, culture and wealth grew as a result of a growth in trade,

but whether this was of Godly benefit remains to be seen in the light of eternity.

Now you may be wondering where I get the idea that economics and wealth is such an important factor in the moulding of men's lives. I draw your attention to (1 Timothy 6 v 6 - 10). Why we should set such great store by wealth should cause us to think in the light of the fact that we cannot carry it out of the world. It is ephemeral (Matt 6 v 25 - 34 cf v 34), "upon the day". Andrew Carnegie the industrialist said, "The man who dies rich, dies disgraced." When Carnegie died in 1919, he left his wife her personal assets, a small cash gift and their property, which was a Manhattan townhouse and their holiday home in Scotland, Skibo Castle. His only daughter, Margaret, received a small trust, and eventually they had to sell the townhome due to its costly upkeep, biographer David Nasaw said. "He left them enough money that they would be comfortable, but never as much money as the children of his fellow robber barons, who lived in enormous luxury,"

The love of silver is the root of all evils (1 Tim 6 v 10). Philanthropy or loving men, being kind to men is seldom the prime reason that men get rich, rather it is an afterthought to the accumulation of wealth. In a humanist system we are not surprised to see a wealth of sins associated with the acquisition of physical wealth. It is at the heart of war and of fightings (Jas 4 v 1 - 3).

Among the two desires of the Kohaleth, the preacher son of David, were the removal of vanity and lies along with the creating of a balanced economy (Prov 30 v 7 - 9). Make me neither poor nor rich he asks the Lord, for both have their attendant problems.

You may be confident about the fact that greed, lust and gain are fundamental factors in the nature of man. (John 2 v 25). From this you will see that mere outward ideologies such as Marxism cannot survive against that powerful inward nature. Greed is ever present in communism⁵ just as it is present among the natives of the pacific Islands (cf John Patton: missionary) to the highest executives of the western world.

We observe two features of this economic system symbolised by the whore, the ideal of mankind. It is rapidly overcome (Rev 18 v 10). The more we see the imperfection of economic systems and agencies (common markets, world banks, multinational corporations etc), the simpler it becomes to ruin the associated nation. The effect of a cartel was quite apparent during the so called oil crisis of the early 1970's. Today financial institutions are walking a technological tight rope (cf Channel 4, Equinox, What they don't tell you about computers). Plastic and electronic money can collapse in chaos with the mere push of a spade (through a cable). The fact that the banking systems use a fractional reserve system means that extended credit is posing immense strains on the system. It is like letting out a steel tape measure. Suddenly it will bend and collapse. There was a case last year where a panic caused a bank to foreclose in America; they did not possess enough cash to pay their credit worthy customers.

⁵ One of the biggest capitalists that I ever met was a Chinese man who emerged unscathed from the days of chairman Mao. Yet in his society people were so covetous and greedy that they would betray people who appeared to have more than them. That was communism.

Debts are being passed around like a parcel in a child's game. The trouble is to keep the systems going, the parcel which is getting bigger and bigger has to be circulated more quickly to give the appearance that there is no real problem, no big debt. The real advantage of electronic banking may be in its ability to allow more credit and faster debt circulation. Blur the problem.

The unifying forces are ideal for God's purpose of destruction (cf Gen 11 v 1, v 7). The second feature of the system under the whore of Babylon is that, it is self destructive. You will not have to destroy it (Rev 17 v 16 - 17). Mankind himself will see that his ideal is a failure and hate it. Yes, he will mourn over it (Rev 18 v 11) rather like those who look back on the past with nostalgia seeing only the ideal and not the whole miserable circumstance like Bill Sykes in *Oliver Twist*, moved with anger against the woman he loved, yet so great the feeling of his betrayal that he cudgels her to death, yet is immediately filled with remorse. Like Judas Iscariot who for 30 pieces of silver betrayed his master, yet straight away torn with grief committed suicide.

Yes, men will realise by sad experience the vanity of their ambition (Ecclesiastes 5 v 10 - 11). Trade increases the number of parasites. More goods, more to feed off of them, service industry, insurance, banking, societies etc. It will all become too much. The failure of ideology and the economic myth will throw the world into its final chaos and God has put it in the minds of men (Rev 17 v 17) to commit that suicide. In their final struggle they turn their vengeance upon God (Rev 17 v 12 - 14). Like many dying men they shall curse God rather than admit that he was right and should be their Lord. Despite what they have seen of their own shattered dreams they will cling to the fragile raft of autonomy (self). I have seen a dying man do this. It is a frightening thing to see, but it will not be your end.

CHAPTER 39. Revelation Chapter 17 continued

THE SECOND COMING AND ANTICHRIST.

We cannot study Revelation without reference to other books in the Scripture and I think that the time has come to take an overview of this demanding subject. I believe that the church in different ages has been privy to information concerning the second coming which has not been or become the general property of the church. (Jude 14) quotes a source lost to our canon, but signifies that the second coming was known.

Paul had spoken to the Thessalonians about the coming (2 Thess 2 v 5) and so the readers were familiar with the subject. The Restrainer (2 Thess 2 v 6) was understood by them, but it is not clear to us. Perhaps this is because the importance and emphasis is different for the church in all time than it was for them. I shall (D.V.) return to the Restrainer.

John likewise familiarised the church with the antichrist (1 John 2 v 18), but there is little detail to identify his person. There are many of them and they come from within the church. Indeed it seems strange that John uses this term and he alone, yet does not draw upon it in his Apocalypse, only in his epistles.

However the point I have been making is that prophecy has enjoyed a fuller revelation in certain ages and that such prophecy may serve a specific and peculiar purpose of God. Remember that the blessings that we have gained from Revelation have not been in the precision of the chronology or exactness of events, but in the certainties of the nature and purpose of God on behalf of His church. Also from what I have already said, the incompleteness of prophecy or rather the general presentation should guard us against too much speculation.

In all ages, the triumphant coming of the Lord has been known and been a source of comfort and strength to the beleaguered church. The visions of Christ kingdom are often given in the symbolism of the age which is readily identifiable with, at least of you were an Old Testament Jew. Ezekiel for example (Ezekiel chapter 40ff) describes the temple in the high mountains of Israel (Ezek 40 v 2). All of the description magnifies and enlarges the known fabric of the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple. Now nowhere is there any command to build this temple which he sees whilst in the captivity (Ezekiel 1 v 1 ff). Certainly Herod's temple never matched it (John 2 v 20), neither did Zerubbabel's (Ezra 3 v 8. cf Ezra 3 v 12 - 13 and Hag 2 v 2).

It is rewarding to examine the nature of the fulfilment of Ezekiel's vision. Take for example the summary in (Ezekiel 37 v 26 - 28). The church sees its benefit (John 1 v 14, 2 Cor 6 v 16, Rev 21 v 1 - 3). Ezekiel saw the temple in heaven yet related it to men in earthly terms. Moses did likewise (Hebrews 8 v 56). Jesus is the fulfilment (John 2 v 20 - 22).

Seen in perspective from the Old Testament, the future often appears compressed (cf Mal 4 v 5 - 6). The Beasts of Daniel 7 v 15 - 17) tend to stand in front of the greater picture in (Revelation 13) hiding them in some sense. However, the main thrust of the Old Testament prophecy whilst outlining the second coming reveals more clearly the first coming of the Lord. It is in the New Testament that we gain our greatest insight into the second and final coming.

In the gospel (Matt 24 v 3) three questions are asked of Jesus concerning the future. They are all answered (cf v 36 ff).

We can now begin, with the use of other scriptures to construct a picture of this event.

1. **TIME:** Human curiosity loves to fix dates on the event and historically you will see that this has occasioned much disappointment. William Miller, the Baptist devoted much energy to this prediction. When the predicted year of 1844 passed unheralded and with much disappointment, new doctrines we employed to explain the error. One was a peculiar doctrine called investigative judgement, held by the newly formed Adventists named 7th Day Adventists. (cf The Great Controversy by Ellen. G. White). The Russelites (J.W's) have also revised their dates as events did not back up their predictions.

To the contrary, the scripture makes it quite plain that it is not given to man to know the time or season. (Matt 24 v 36, Mark 13 v 33, Matt 24 v 44, Acts 1 v 6 - 7). From this we receive an admonition that the time is not relevant to our study purposes. Even the prophets who gave the messages could not wrestle the date from the material (1 Peter 1 v

10 - 12), how could we?

2. **MANNER:** The manner of the event is given, so that we may not be deceived about events. It will be a great public occasion, not a secret event (Matt 24 v 24 - 26). It will be on the clouds (Matt 24 - 30) (Acts 1 v 11), in flaming fire (2 Thess 1 v 8), with angels (Mark 8 v 38), with power (2 Thess 1 v 7), with all of His Saints (1 Thess 3 v 13), as the lightning shines (Matt 24 v 27).

3. **PURPOSE:** The events associated with the Advent reveal some of God's purpose. The coming is for judgement (Jude 15). It will herald the general resurrection of the dead (1 Thess 4 v 16), (Rev 20 v 11 - 13) (1 Cor 15 v 51). The living will also be swept up in the Apocalypse (1 Thess 4 - 16), that is you and I if we are alive at the time. (The failure of the film Omen III, 'The Final Conflict', to show this, explains man's common hope that he will in some way escape it).

4. **THE EFFECT:** The world as we know it will at that time cease to function (2 Peter 3 v 10) (Heb 1 v 10 - 12).

The book of Revelation that we have been studying looks at specific global aspects of God's providential government prior to that coming. Associated with it is the rise of an individual called the man of sin (2 Thess 2 v 4). Is this the Antichrist of John's Epistles? How will world history reveal this character? DV I shall explore this territory next time.

CHAPTER 40. Revelation chapter 18

BABYLON THE GREAT - REVISING THE REALITY (1).

We have all lived so long in Babylon the Great that our standards and values are somewhat tempered by the experience. What, though, would a world in which righteousness flourished offer by way of labour and fulfilment? What would a world of happiness offer, a world with no tears, grief, death, sickness? What would men do? Such a world is one we are the citizens of (Rev 21 v 2 - 5; 21 v 1 - 5) and it is at odds with Babylon who looks to material welfare (Rev 18 v 11 - 19). Most of our employment is aimed at shoring up moral deficiency by force of arms, legislation, science and environment. We do not tackle the roots of the problem, but merely fiddle with the symptoms. Morality is not the primary motivation in Babylon, acquisition is (Jas 4).

I am not saying it is wrong to be engaged in occupations under Babylon's rule, but we must be governed with moral motivations and this John the Baptist pointed out (Luke 3 v 10 - 14). The problem in this world is whether you are labouring for God or mammon? What is the means and what is the end? Mammon comes from the Aramaic "mamona", wealth, profit, in turn from the Babylonian "mimma" = "anything at all". The primary obligation in all of our employment, (from housewife to technician), is to God (Matt 6 v 24), acquisition is secondary (Matt 6 v 25 ff). It is interesting to note that many of us will not be able to continue our secular employment in glory since there will be no weapons or war, no sick (no nurses), no building, no mothers and children (housewives). So while we are in Babylon, not

motivated by mammon, what is our role?

It is the using of things in this life for eternal benefit. The story of the steward is relevant as an illustration (Luke 16 v 1 - 13). The steward was a waster (v1. Διασκορπίζω = diaskorpizō a scatterer. Hence scorpion = a scatterer of poison). However, the steward was wise enough to have developed a sense of perspective concerning his future, which at the time looked pretty grim. He was likely to be unemployed in a short time and possibly unemployable! He wasn't capable of a career moving into labouring and he felt ashamed at the idea of becoming a beggar. It wasn't an ideal situation and he soon realised it was to his advantage to make friends with the debtors and at least he would be able to enter their houses (Luke 16 v 4 - 5). The master praised the man for his prudence (not his wisdom but his 'minding'), mindfulness or presence of mind might be a modern phrase to fit the picture. "The rich man had to admire the rascal for "being so shrewd".

Now I do not think that Jesus is telling us that cheating, thieving, fear are praiseworthy attributes. The story merely illustrates the fact that in a situation that is far from ideal, it is possible to salvage something for the future. In Babylon, all is not lost. The mammon of Babylon can be used for good. It can make friend, eternal friends (v 9). We can exercise faithfulness with the mammon of unrighteousness. We shall have to examine the consequences of this further at another time. This is not 'tenth-ing' it is 'all-ing'. We are merely warned that there should be an eternal motivation behind our labours.

For us, in the light of Revelation and the other scriptures there is the need for the revision of reality. One of the great disappointments in my own correspondence with local ministers over "Christmas" is how easily they have fallen prey to satan. The underlying evil is made to be good and this is an early and common deception of the devil (Gen 3 v 5). In Hitler's rise to power certain ministers warned the government against "the new paganism". Hitler handled it with characteristic demonic brilliance. He joined the issue also warning against "the new paganism". Later he punished the men.

The early church was not unfamiliar with the devices of satan (2 Cor 2 v 11) and historically the true church has perceived reality beyond this world and into the next. We must make ourselves conscious of the eternal realities and work with those in mind and not the short term gains and material acquisitions of Babylon. The book of Revelation has bought us to see that there are invisible forces and processes at work in the world (Rev 1 v 12, Rev 2 v 1, Rev 4 v 1 ff, Rev 6 v 1 ff, Rev 7 v 1 etc). There are spiritual agencies at work and it is our duty to evaluate the truth about what we perceive as a result of their actions in the world. Are the prophecies we hear of God or man? What tests can we apply? (see Deut 13 v 1 - 5). True signs, real miracles are not proof. Supernatural counsel (it might be demonic) is not proof of its origin. It is the combination of sign and word (v 2). Does it accord with what you know or does it contradict it? Sincerity is no substitute for absolute truth.

The conflict we are in is between Christ and satan, who desires to sift us (Luke 22 v 31), destroy us (Job 2 v 3 - 5), deceive us (John 8 v 44), murder us (John 8 v 44). This is not just against believers, but against his own, by possession and destruction (Mark 16 v 9, Mark 20 v 22).

The devil deceives us about the unseen world of reality, sometimes appearing as an angel (2 Cor 11 v 14), sometimes as a lion (1 Peter 5 v 8). He encourages men to caricature him with horns and a tail. With such disguises he makes them and the unwitting Christians unaware.

You will perhaps have observed how he encourages men to blaspheme and use the name of God in vain. Christ is a curse upon men's lips daily, in violation of the command (Ex 20 v 7). Yet how often have you heard men use the name of satan as a curse? No never. The deception is almost complete. They do not acknowledge his existence, yet they are his servants. It is our duty to see and know how he works so that we might fully "stand against him" and he will flee (James 4 v 3). He is characteristically a coward, hitting out at the weak and foolish. His is the system in which we labour and against which we fight. As a part of the revision of reality I want to take us next time D.V. into the "unknown" and see what the bible reveals about the world to come and the world that now is, but unseen.

CHAPTER 41. Revelation chapter 18

REVISING REALITY CONTINUED (2)

We noted that the traffic of Babylon included bodies and souls (Rev 18 v 13). The interest was more than enslaving the bodies of men, it was aimed at securing the soul. Jesus differentiated between the two (Matt 10 v 28) where it appears that men cannot destroy the soul, but God can. However the soul of man can be corrupted by spiritual influences. I want to look more at the spiritual influences in the life of men in our revision of reality, since to a majority of mankind the spiritual realm does not exist.

There are forces of good and evil at work in this world. The life of Job is a battle ground for the soul (see Job 2 v 1 - 10). Satan's effort was to turn the godly man against God (v 5) and make him curse his maker. The devil is clearly working through his wife for she utters the words of satan (v 9). It becomes quite clear that evil personalities influence and inhabit men in their attempt to turn them against God. In the rebuke of the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14 v 12 ff) there is a spiritual allusion to a higher being, perhaps satan (angel of light), in the person of the king. A similar thing happens in (Ezekiel 28 v 11 ff) where the king of Tyre is portrayed as a fallen higher being. The kings are both identified with higher beings, since so completely has the evil personality assumed the human office.

Demon possession is one of the great realities of life. Devils can alter personalities and behaviour in men to such an extent that they are unrecognisable. The devils do not always clearly reveal themselves (Luke 8 v 26 ff). Notice how the group address themselves through an individual entity (v 28) hiding the multitude (v 30). It is a great gift of the spirit to discern spirits (1 Cor 12 v 10). How many of the people that we meet daily, I wonder are possessed or influenced to a greater degree by individual demons? There is of course, the general working of Evil, but there is also the specific (Eph 2 v 1 ff).

We should revise our attitudes to people in the light of what I have said. So often we are annoyed and angry with men, forgetting these major influences in their lives. We vent our spleen against men and do not really focus on the root cause of their behaviour - satan.

Perhaps this is why we feel frustration and do not achieve much in our efforts. Paul makes this quite plain (Eph 6 v 11 ff). When we deal with sin in our lives, in the lives of those we meet, in the lives of our children, let us not lose sight of the working of satan. It may make us more effective in our ministry. We should be angry with satan and his evil hordes and turn our weapons upon them. We must attack the "Demons in hiding".

It is of course, not enough to cast devils out. Jesus warns us of this (Matt 12 v 43 ff). Merely sweeping the house out makes the environment fit for a greater working of evil. They can come back in greater force. It is only by the filling of the spirit of God that evil can be permanently shut out. Without the new birth little has been achieved.

One of satan's deceits in these days is to fool man into thinking he is the son of God. All men are sons of God, we often hear. This is a lie. The Jews argued that they were sons of God, Jesus said differently (John 8 v 41 ff). Children of God are children of biblical faith (John 1 v 11 ff). Men must be show what they are and into whose power they have fallen. We must trouble them in their own complacency. It is not the addition of good principles to their existing life that will save them, it is the death of the life they have and the birth into a new life with Christ (Rom 6 v 1 ff). Never be complacent with the unbeliever, never be deceived by their protestations of goodness, for nothing less than Jesus can save them.

We shall of course meet opposition, but we must face up to it hard and square. God's angels do! In (Daniel 9) which we are beginning to study, Daniel having understood Jeremiah's prophecy, confess the sins of the nation. One man can become an intercessor for a nation! Gabriel gives him confidence that the covenant still abides (v 27) and shall be confirmed. All is not lost for the people of God. The end of God's wrath upon His people is drawing near and at the same time he disposes of Babylon and its king Belshazzar (Dan 5 v 1, Dan 8 v 1) setting up a new empire (Dan 9 v 1) who would release the Israelites.

A further vision is given to Daniel under Cyrus (Dan 10 v 1 - 3) looking forward to a time of trial (see Dan 8 v 12) perhaps giving more details of this previous vision, which he understood. It must have seemed strange, perhaps dampening the joy of the restoration now going on to see a time of gloom in the future. It turned for Daniel into a time of mourning (Dan 9 v 2) and for 3 weeks he fasts.

Now it did not take 3 weeks for his prayer to reach heaven, it took heaven 3 weeks to send the answer! The prayer was heard the first day (Dan 10 v 12). The delay was caused by the "prince of Persia" and a war in heaven (Rev 12 v 7). From the identity of these "Princes" (cf Dan 10 v 20) we are given an indication that the battles of earth are extensions of the heavenly battles, with heaven the primary battle ground (Eph 6 v 12). There are national representatives, in a sense spiritual champions. Although the earthly kingdom of Persia seemingly was not at war with Israel and to all intents and purposes it was actually assisting national restoration behind the scenes! Michael (see notes on Michael in Revelation) (Dan 12 v 1) was fighting the prince of Persia. Do not be misled by the uneasy truces that exist upon earth.

The spiritual powers were attempting to stop comfort for one of Gods people (Dan 10 v 13) and for 21 days the angel fought to get through, while Daniel laboured in sorrow (Dan 10 v 2

- 3). Clearly the powers did not want Gods revelation of the end to be made known (Dan 10 v 14), but it could not be stopped.

I believe the same powers are at work in our lives, labouring to stop us understanding the word. Fighting to make us dissatisfied with the Lord's way and live lives of mourning not joy in the Lord. Rejoice ALWAYS!

Know the symptoms, spot the cause, there are spiritual forces and persons at work in our lives.

CHAPTER 42. Revelation chapter 18

We have been studying the unseen powers that intrude and regulate our lives over the last few weeks. In view of this and the awareness that Revelation gives us of world events it seems strange to receive a call to "come out of her my people" (Rev 18 v 4), surely we do or do we? There is a presumption that the Christian is somehow separate in virtue of the redemptive work of Christ and that this is sufficient. It is sadly a popular misconception. Judicially, that is in law and principle, we are members of the Kingdom of God, but that is a far cry from the practical application of that principle. It is possible to thwart and override the principle. The parable of the sower (Matt 13) shows how the word of God can be overridden by worldly influences (Matt 13 v 22). Paul also issues a warning to the Saints about the attendant problems associated with living in a sinful world (2 Cor 6 v 14 - 18).

Paul is talking about something made clear in the Law of Moses (Deut 22 v 9 - 11) (Deut 22 v 5). I believe that it is part of the 7th command, not to commit adultery (Ex 20 v 14). These seemingly arbitrary rules about mixing constantly brought the Israelite in the course of his daily dealings, face to face with the idea of separation. Like could go with like, but mixing was forbidden. Promiscuity is the process of mixing, in the face of Gods law. This occurs in the churches with ecumenism, where a promiscuous love is practised. False teaching and heresy are relegated into a lower position since "love" we are told is the overriding virtue. How can we love heresy, false doctrine, false teachers and false practice?

It occurs in marriages, mixed marriages and mixed friendships. The unbelievers, be they wife or social acquaintance will never encourage your interest in Christ. You must evaluate your human relationships in the light of biblical edict to separation. It does however present us with a paradox! I have already discussed this in the light of our necessary dealings with the world (see Luke 3 v 11 ff) which John the Baptist deals with.

A practical, biblical example of separation is in the life of the prophet Daniel. He was, as we are all well aware, familiar with the prophecies of the great prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah's prophecy is full of warnings against Babylon and its assured downfall (Jeremiah 51 v 45). In this same chapter the prophet foresaw the collapse of the Babylonian Empire in the face of the Median Empire (Jer 51 v 11). Yet this same Daniel was one of the chief officers of the Babylonian empire. There was no attempt by Daniel to geographically obey the command to get out of the nation, to run away to another land and for this reason, I assume that he views the words in a mere spiritual way. He was present in the capital itself on the very

night of the invasion (Daniel 5) when the holy vessels of the tabernacle were abused. He was even honoured at the great feast (Daniel 5 v 29).

The Medes broke the back of the Babylonian empire and effectively destroyed it, but not the captives or Daniel the prophet. Why? I believe that the reason is that Daniel was spiritually separated. He was not influenced by the principles of Babylon and he continued to assert his "Judeo-Christian" values. This is clearly seen in the next chapter (Daniel 6). Now you and I must ask ourselves whether we are of the same spirit as Daniel and whether we have been overcome by Babylon or whether we have kept our principles intact? Will you rejoice over her fall or will you be saddened by the loss of things that you love (Rev 18 v 20).

There is here in (Rev 18 v 21 - 24) a concept, more clearly expressed than in any other place in the scriptures. It concerns the intermediate and final state of mankind, that is, what happens after death. Just as there are two states of man (1 Cor 15 v 22) and only two, there are two states in the life to come, heaven and hell (Matt 13 v 36 - 43).

Heaven is a place of rewards (1 Cor 3 v 12 ff), a place of comfort (Luke 16 v 25), of structured rule (Matt 25 v 14 - 30) and service (Rev 22 v 3). Just as there is an implied graduation in status and rewards in heaven, so too there is a graduation of punishment in terms of severity in the place we call hell (Mk 12 v 40). Hell is a Scandinavian word, related to our word "hole" and it was applied to a scrap bin in the shoemakers workshop. It is a place of fire, like the rubbish dump in the valley of Hinnon on the west/southwest side of Jerusalem, hence the Hebrew Gehenna (Matt 18 v 9). Despite the fire of torment it is a dark place (Matt 8 v 11 - 12) and a place of worms which never die (Mark 9 v 48).

Remember these are all gospel pictures of hell, painted by our Lord Himself. Jesus paints a vivid picture of the life to come for the sinner. Clearly God does not love them - for ever! Hell is not remedial or temporary! It is not a place of correction for preparation to enter heaven (the Catholic purgatory, a place of purging). If this were so, the word "everlasting" would not be used in connection with the various torments.

There is also I believe a further condition implied in (Rev 18 v 21 - 24). All of the activities that the inhabitants of hell, set up in Babylon, can no longer be implemented in hell. Art, music, joy, the aesthetic side of existence will have no place. As a community, hell has no appreciation and no outworking. It is not constructive. There is no place or ability to be so, such is the anguish and torment which does not decrease or mitigate with time. It will always be as painful as the instant of suffering forever.

I see in our children different aspects of creativeness and ability, if they do not repent and believe, as citizens of hell these things will have no meaning or place.

THE ANTICHRIST.

Before we get into this study I wish to reiterate some thoughts on a verse relevant to the interpretation of prophecy. It is (Rev 19 v 10). In the sounds of the vision (Rev 19 v 6 ff, John appears so seized by the sights and sounds that he falls to worship the being before him. Prophecy has not caused John to fall in the right direction and his action needs correcting. "Worship God" (19 v 10) he is exhorted and there is a reason. For the witness of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Prophecy should direct us ultimately to Jesus, to God. It should not lead us to fall at the feet of Gods other servants, high, low, good or bad! The core or spirit of prophecy is in the final analysis, **the testimony of Jesus** (all that He is and has done and will do). In the same fashion we also saw that the shadows forming the fabric of the Old Testament had their meaning and reality in Christ (Col 2 v 16, 17).

I say this to guard us against speculation beyond the word of God and that we might not get preoccupied with the lesser figures of the Divine plan such as the devil, the beast, the whore and the man of sin. The gaps and * that we shall find in this study are I believe part of that deliberate plan to warn us away from an empty pursuit and back to Christ.

Let us first look at the term antichrist. The preposition (anti-) can mean substitution or opposition. That is one who is in place of Christ or one who is against Christ. The usage will have to determine which. As we suggested last time, the term antichrist is used only in the epistles of John and rather strangely not in Revelation. It is therefore speculation to make the beast (Rev 17 v 17 cf 11), the little horn of (Daniel 7), the false prophet of (Rev 19 v 20) that person. As we have suggested it is for a good reason. Revelation is the Revelation of Jesus Christ (Rev 1 v 1) not the Revelation of Antichrist. If the spirit of God had desired, the link could have been made with the term familiar to John.

1 John 2 v 18. Many antichrists have come, hence we know that it is the last hour. Clearly antichrist is a collective term for people in the world during John's day. For them and for us it was a sign of the last hour. These people "went out from us". The origin of the spirit of antichrist is the church (from us), the brethren. This is a strange thought, for we look to the outsiders, the plain unbelievers as being the real enemies, but there are enemies within the brethren. There were "many" from which we know or perceive the times.

1 John 2 v 22. "Who is the liar?" (ψεῦστης = pseustēs, a pseud) but he who denies Jesus is the Christ.

1 John 4 v 3. Who does not confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh, this is antichrist (of the antichrist).

2 John 7. Many wanderers (πλάνος = planos whence planet) have gone out into the world, they who do not confess Jesus coming in flesh, this is the wanderer and antichrist.

Antichrist is a generic term for apostates and perhaps points to the antichrist, "You have heard that antichrist comes". In general it refers to those who undermine the person and

work of Christ (Jehovahs Witnesses, the Bishop of Durham etc.). They are antichrist. We shall see antichrist in our own times and from them a greater one shall arise.

There is much similarity between the antichrist and the man of sin! The 'anti-' from Johns usage points to opposition rather than substitution. In the man of sin a more sinister trait is revealed, that of substitution for Christ (cf 2 Thess 2 v 1 ff). Again there is nothing to make the direct link between "man of sin" and "the antichrist" although they may turn out to be the same person, they could be different beings.

As with antichrist, apostasy is part of the process of his coming (2 Thess 2 v 3). Apostasy is separation, a turning away from and the word is used for divorce (Matt 5 v 31) or perhaps a bill of divorce. It is interesting to see that he is also called the son of perdition (Appollyon) the term applied to Iscariot (John 17 v 12). This again reinforces the idea of the man of sin coming from orthodoxy into rebellion and betrayal of Christ. He is an opponent of God (the spirit of antichrist). (2 Thess 2 v 4) He declares that he is God, the incarnation is God becoming MAN. (The apostasy is man becoming God!). This was the sin of Adam in his attempt at self determination. The devil encouraged Adam to be as God (Gen 3 v 5).

The final conflict will be between this Adam and the second Adam, Christ (1 Cor 15 v 45 - 46). The man of sin is the ultimate revelation of human depravity, void of restraint (2 Thess 2 v 7), taking Adam's sin to its ultimate manifestation.

When Adam sinned, God issued a restraint (Gen 3 v 17 "cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life"). The curse was in one sense a benefit, "for thy account". It did not culminate in the ultimate destruction of Adam and it did not rule out personal redemption for him. Adam may well have been a saved man! Without restraint Adam could have become the absolute rebel, the man of sin.

How then does this all fit into the book of Revelation? I will make a suggestion. The whore of Babylon is a world system with an economic base, a common factor among the people of the world and a unifying force (Rev 17 v 17) of nations. Having achieved unification it has served its purpose. The kings (Rev 17 v 12) are a confederacy, given power for a short time through the beast.

The Lord puts it into their heart to destroy the system that they have created (Rev 17 v 17) whence their true purpose is revealed not merely to offer an alternative to God or just an opposing system. They are a substitution for God Himself. The man of sin and Antichrist are perhaps, the leaders of this rebellious fraction. Having gathered the evil crop together, the Lord descends to make war and destroy them all (Rev 19 v 11 ff) and declare His own kingship. ***"The Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall annul by the appearance of His coming"*** (2 Thess 2 v 8). At this time all those other events that we discussed in our last study shall come to pass. The end in our last study shall come to pass. The end is pure victory and rejoicing (Rev 18 v 20). Gladden your hearts with this! Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev 19 v 16).

THE KINGDOM 1

I now wish to approach the question of the Millennium and endeavour to place some interpretation of the passage together with answering some of the questions that I raised. Firstly, I wish to look at the concept of the reign of Christ (Rev 20 v 4). There was in my mind a distinct lack of emphasis in our overviews of other systems of interpretation, of the Kingdom of Christ. They looked at the church, Armageddon, the second coming, tribulation, civil affairs etc. Indeed in present day Evangelism, the movement is towards conversion primarily, rather than the establishment and the advancement of the Kingdom of God, with its discipleship if we can cast aside prejudice and traditional thought. Let us cast aside tradition in favour of a biblical position. I wish to show that the Kingdom of God is a major doctrine of the scripture.

The Kingdom of God, not the church, is I believe a central theme of the New Testament. Its inception is perhaps the only event of the New Testament that receives a time and date reference (Luke 3 v 1 ff). This is the beginning of John's ministry of preparation for the Kingdom of God (Matt 3 v 1 - 2). Immediately following the manifestation of the Beloved son, Jesus begins to announce the presence of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1 v 14 ff). A kingdom is the dominion or rule of a king, hence the Kingdom of God is the institution of the dominion of God. It is of interest that Jesus does not at this time declare His kingship, but the nature of the kingdom. In fact it is not until one week before the Crucifixion that Jesus accepts the public accolade of a king (John 12 v 12 - 16).

We might pause to ask, why did He not declare Himself king at the start? Prophecy expected a king and Herod felt exposed at the very threat (Matt 2 v 3 - 6) and acting upon this murdered the newborns to eradicate opposition. Perhaps the answer is not to be found in a fear that to express kingship would expose Him to death which indeed it did (Luke 23 v 2 - 3). I think it is more reasonable that Jesus did not want to give the people the idea that He had come to establish an earthly kingdom and so become a focal point for the national revival, thus He concentrates on the kingdom and its spiritual nature and virtues.

It was probably the emphasis on the doctrine of the kingdom in both John and Jesus teaching that prompted the Pharisee Nicodemus to seek special council from Jesus (John 3 v 1 ff). This radical teaching undermined the Jewish confidence that salvation was by lineal descent from Abraham (Matt 3 v 7 -12). It also prompted the consideration of the spiritual dimension in the kingdom (v 11). Hence Jesus brushes aside Nicodemus' preamble and comes straight to the point about what is worrying the man. Nicodemus is worried about the Kingdom of God! Nicodemus was a sincere man (John 7 v 50, John 19 v 39) and sought to know the truth.

Firstly, Jesus says, the kingdom is not perceived by natural means (John 3 v 30). It is not a second birth in the natural state of affairs (v 4 - 5), but one from above - heavenly and spiritual. Jesus is clearly speaking of heavenly things (v 12) and if we accept the genuineness of the verse (13), from heaven as well ('who is in heaven', doctrinally this is perfectly in order). This is a great declaration of authority, for who else could speak of this unseen

kingdom save one who had also come from it! It is interesting that in this discourse the Lord refers to an Old Testament event as an example of His own ministry (Numbers 21 v 4 - 9). In this chapter is clearly stated the resentment about Gods way of deliverance (v 5). As a punishment God sends deadly serpents among the Israelites and they are picked off one by one until there is an attitude of repentance. However it is also repentance and faith since the Lord set before the people an object to look upon (the Aesculapian serpent). This has become a symbol of healing throughout the world. This symbol eventually became an idol in its own right (2 Kings 18 v 4) just as crucifixes have become in our own day and was destroyed!

Jesus is saying to Nicodemus, I am just like that serpent, for all those bitten of the serpent shall likewise look upon me and live. How gracious of the Lord in both Moses day and ours to give time to those bitten to look and live (Rev 2 v 21). However in the case of Jesus the cure is eternal. Therefore we have in Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus the pulling together of ideas. The idea of kingdom, spiritual in its nature, accepted by faith in Christ and eternal in its duration.

You see, Jesus does not emphasise the church, church membership as essential and preeminent, rather it is the Kingdom of God and faith in His healing power over the serpent that is essential.

How often our goals are earthly. We look to earthly prosperity and big churches as things to go for. Yet what does Jesus say (Matt 6 v 33)? We are so often preoccupied with making earthly plans, barn building, career chasing, money minding and pleasure pursuing. Martha typified this (Luke 10 v 38 - 42). She prioritises her domestic labour above fellowship with the King. I am not aware that in the New Testament Jesus enters into the trivial pursuit of men talking about work, promotion, leisure, or even encourages it. No casual conversation, no passing time but rather He constantly fixes on the spiritual. Spiritual virtues, self improvement spiritually, careers in the Kingdom of God! Always it is (Matt 6 v 33).

It is from the spiritual attainments that the blessings of this life flow (Mark 10 v 28 - 31) as it were incidental to the main thrust of the Kingdom of God. In the Old Testament it was the Law that gave blessing, here it is the righteousness of the kingdom.

I trust as you and I grow in the faith, that we are more and more struck by the trivial nature of the unbelieving life. Grass to be cast into the furnace. Here today gone tomorrow. How dull is the company of an unbeliever when Christ cannot enter upon the scene of your conversation. How pointless are the reminiscings of the past, long gone and buried. It is the future and the present which hold advantage. It is the kingdom which holds the key to life. Even Christ Himself.

THE KINGDOM 2

Last week I began to show the pre-eminence of the Kingdom of God in the New Testament as the theme developed in the ministries of John and Jesus. It was something to pray about (Matt 6 v 10), such that the will of God in Heaven might appear done on Earth. As suggested, this heavenly and spiritual dominion does not draw its power from the arm of the flesh. Perhaps the most definitive statement of its nature is found in Jesus' testimony to Pontius Pilate (John 18 v 33 - 38). Clearly the kingdom is not of this world. Resistance to this act against King Jesus would have been justified if the kingdom was of this world. Jesus certainly has armies (Matt 26 v 53), but they are not temporal (even though they might inflict a temporal deliverance - by implication!).

This teaching has some quite severe ramifications, particularly when enforced by other New Testament Scriptures (i.e: Eph 6 v 10 ff, Rom 14 v 17). Not least perhaps, as to how we establish our relationships with society and law and order. Since the kingdom is spiritual, there is no gain in an outwardly Christianised world, since such cannot enter the kingdom. There is no encouragement to a compromise relationship with civil kingdom (synergism). The scripture (Rom 13 v 1 - 8) needs careful interpretation. The fact that God might limit temporal wickedness by the hand of unbelievers is no justification for acceptance of them on equal terms with the believers in the kingdom. Neither is it consistent to serve two masters by saying that the laws of the kingdom are binding upon a believer, but that if he changes his role (say to a magistrate) he can now kill with God's blessing. These are issues that deserve more attention at another time, when we have better defined the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God was not an isolated dogma associated with events in the gospels. At the last supper, the representatives of Christ receive the kingdom as His representatives (Luke 22 v 29 - 30). They receive it by appointment (v 29) where the Greek word is related to 'covenant'. Christ covenants the kingdom to His disciples and I suggest, their descendants in the spirit. How many times have you considered the object of the New Covenant? I am quite sure that you are aware of the symbols and elements (1 Cor 11 v 23 ff), but this is not the object of the covenant. Let me explain and illustrate, using (Hebrews 9 v 15 ff).

1. Covenants have a MEDIATOR.
2. HEIRS (the called or elect)
3. the METHOD OF GIVING (gracious bequest)
4. CONDITIONS (obedience – i.e. them that wait upon Him (v 28)
5. THE OBJECT MEDIATED (the eternal inheritance).

This eternal inheritance I take not just to be eternal life in isolation, but eternal life in the community of the Kingdom of God. As the writer goes on to say (Heb 12 v 28) we "receiving a kingdom". In looking at the elements of the table, the body and blood, as it were of our king laid out before us, we see also that which He has mediated. His kingdom. Let us grasp this more firmly as the days progress.

Thus armed with the keys of the kingdom (Matt 16 v 19) the apostles continue the preaching of the kingdom (Acts 8 v 12 [15 v 22]; 19 v 8; 20 v 25; 25 v 23 - 31). So we see that the kingdom is a fundamental and major subject of doctrine in the New Testament.

Let us now turn to consider other aspects of the kingdom. Starting with an overview presented in a delightful parabolic way (Matt 13 v 18 - 50). In order to make distinctions and clarify the various points of each parable, I will use a tool that we have developed to analyze our world about us in a Christian way. For those who have not fully grasped the benefit of this system, we should perhaps hold a series of teachings upon it again.

Simply speaking (over simply!!) we may consider our world possessing different aspects, which are related and having particular centres of meaning (meaning Nuclei). Thus in speaking of something like "death", we must apply this tool to discern that death has various aspects (physical, biotic, historical, social, moral, political). Used correctly you can generally get to the bottom of someone's point of view quite quickly and often see that a discussion may only be centred in one aspect of temporal reality.

With this in mind we can quite rapidly see in (Matt 13), that Jesus in delineating the kingdom is not merely expressing the same thought with different picture images. Rather, each picture is a different thought and by this we can grasp that the kingdom permeates every aspect of reality, since it affects all modal aspects (see appendix 2).

1. FAITH (Matt 13 v 18 - 23) Joy, understanding, roots and productivity.
2. LIFE (v 24 - 30) JUDICIAL (v 30)
3. PHYSICAL (v 31 - 32)
4. KINETIC (v 33) (UNSEEN WORKING)
5. HISTORICAL (v 36 - 43) JUDICIAL (v 41)
6. AESTHETIC (v 44) CHRISTIAN VALUE (Matt 6 v 33)
7. ECONOMIC (v 45 - 46)
8. ARITHMETIC (v 47 - 50) JUDICIAL (v 49)

So what can we say about the Kingdom of God as revealed in Jesus' discourse? The word of the kingdom is not received equally or permanently, neither does it have the same effect on growth in each person. The kingdom is indiscriminate in its outworking (like man v 24), but capable of great growth (v 39). It is precious above all earthly treasures. It works in an unseen way (like yeast) and ultimately will have an effect upon all mankind. The growth of the kingdom culminates in judgement which is the final separation of mankind and the sentence of external suffering upon the sons of the evil one. While it exists with evil it does not work with evil and maintains a separate identity.

THE KINGDOM 3

The Kingdom of God is then a major doctrine of the New Testament and the inheritance of the covenant in Christ. It is the subject of the gospel; (Matt 4 v 23) and this reveals the king of the kingdom, Jesus (2 Cor 10 v 14). Entry is by spiritual rebirth into the world to come (Heb 12 v 22). I make a few observations in passing.

1. The gospel of the kingdom puts a strong emphasis upon the benefits of the kingdom and eternal life existing NOW! (No Futurism). Religion and church going are not for the purpose of gaining bonus points for entry at death.
2. The fact that much emphasis is placed upon the church (meetings and buildings etc.) rather than the kingdom, does I believe isolate people from practical Christianity and duty in day to day living. Church is for Sundays and so becomes an oasis rather than a springboard for the kingdom.

Today I want to start looking at some of the practicalities of the kingdom. There is the need in our lives to outwork Christ's victory over sin (Phil 2 v 12 - 13) (1 Tim 4 v 16). The emotional encounter with the spirit of God in our regeneration and conversion does not sanctify us in practice. Too many Christians stop at that point. Salvation is a process (Rom 13 v 11 - 14) (2 Thess 2 v 13 - 14). Faith when it has endured and overcome, issues in the salvation of your souls (1 Peter 1 v 9). Perhaps the complacency and indolence that we encounter among those who profess salvation in Christ is due to this misunderstanding.

Now lest you should accuse me of rank Arminianism, I am not saying that there is any such thing as falling from salvation. Indeed if you consider my definition it is not possible to fall from that which has not been fully acquired. We have present tokens of the grace of God, but so did the Jews (Rom 9 v 4 - 5). Yet confidence in the face of personal hypocrisy is misplaced (Rom 2 v 17 ff). If you are a man being saved you will be undergoing change, casting off old ways, old ways of thinking and acting for new ways consistent with your profession of faith. You are all familiar with the idea of metamorphosis. It means a change of form such as with the caterpillar that spins a silk thread about itself and becomes a pupa. From this emerges a butterfly. Metamorphosis is a Greek word and is used to describe the transfiguration (Mark 9 v 2). It is also applied to the believers' mental change (Rom 12 v 2) and the spiritual change (2 Cor 3 v 18). It is not change for its own sake, but a necessary part of the Christian experience, one which I venture to suggest is part of the life long walk in the faith. It is a law of nature that babies grow physically and it is the same for spiritual growth. People who don't grow and don't change must put a big question mark over their lives. It is time to begin to worry.

In the kingdom, the subjects of the king must be changed and renewed in their minds. There is a great debate about whether homosexuals can be part of a church. It is claimed that it is almost a Christian virtue and duty to tolerate such individuals. Well, in its earthly and visible manifestations, homosexuals may well be accepted into the church (Local), but make no mistake they are not members of the Kingdom of God (1 Cor 6 v 7 - 11). God has no rooms for them.

In this short statement (1 Cor 6) we can still see the relevance of much of the Old Testament law structure. It does not hold the same judicial structure, but has rather assumed a passive form, so that the Christian can form distinctions and principles of conduct. We do not find the same emphasis in the New Testament on administering punishments for transgressions as we do in the Old Testament. That is why I suggest that the law has assumed a more passive form.

When Paul observes that fornication exists (1 Cor 5 v 1), he does not encourage the church to invoke the punishments of the OT, (Lev 20 v 9 - 21). In this the Kingdom of God functions differently from the Old Testament kingdom of Israel. Spiritual measures are taken (1 Cor 5 v 5) and this is wholly consistent with the principles of Christian warfare (Eph 6 v 10 ff). The Kingdom of God fights sin from a spiritual plane. Heaven itself visits the transgressor and this is seen vividly in two illustrations from the New Testament (There are others!)

1. (Acts 5 v 1 ff) the case of Ananias and Sapphira.
2. (1 Cor 11 v 27 - 29) the believer at the Lords table.

I am beginning to see that there is a dimension to our faith that has been sadly neglected. It concerns the spiritual power of the Lord available in the confrontation with wickedness.

It may be frustration that leads us to use the laws of Moses to bring obedience and order to a sinful world. This is Rushdoony's Christian Reconstruction position (and perhaps Ian Paisleys in Ireland)! I would rather see the Lord working in the power of the New Testament exercising spiritual government from heaven than man's attempt to create a failed system of law. Perhaps in a later study we shall consider how we do this. How much better it will be to see God dealing with men directly through us, rather than locking them up or inflicting Mosaic justice upon them by our own arm.

But let us return to our subject. The new man is the subject of the king and a member of the Kingdom. The old man is dead (Rom 6 v 6). What we were must be reckoned as dead and to have been "put off" (Col 3 v 9). It is the "pupa case" to use an analogy. We must now encourage ourselves to put on our new garments fit for the Kingdom of God. Paul shows us this wonderful contrast in (Ephesians 4 v 25 - 32). It may help you as a tool for Christian counselling. In this passage it lists what is wrong and immediately shows you what is right! In place of falsehood - open honesty, frankness (v 25). In place of resentment a settling of the cause of anger (v 26). You and I know many angry people who brood on the cause. They do nothing about confronting the cause and like a sore it festers and festers into a great wound. Like a splinter that is left in the flesh it goes septic and causes much pain. Paul's advice, get it sorted out before you go to bed.

You know the hymn, "What a friend we have in Jesus" and the line "Oh, what needless pain we bear". That applies here. You can have a calmer and more relaxed, peaceful life when you sort out problems in Gods way.

I will close here to let you study the implications of the other verses.

THE KINGDOM 4

We continue where we left off last week, pursuing our theme of the Kingdom of God in (Ephesians). It is perhaps of use to make some general observations on the Epistle to enable us to see the relevance of the passage we are studying to the whole Epistle. There are two major aspects (1) The standing of the Christian. (2) The state of the Christian. In the opening chapters Paul outlines the Divine dynamics of Gods purpose in Christ (ch 1 v 3 ff - ch 2 v 22). This is a declaration of Divine sovereignty in Election. (v 11) and the purpose of redemption (v 18). This is further clarified as it applies to you and I in the change of nature (ch 2 v 1) that is expected of those who are redeemed (2 v 10). In all of this we see our own standing in Christ.

We might consider that all of this is theoretical, so it is necessary to see the practical import and this we go on to examine by looking at our state as Christians. The outworking is examined by attention to the Christian ministry in general (4 v 11) and the personal application in particular (4 v 17 ff).

Some of you may have come across the book "The two natures in the child of God" (E. W. Bullinger). The general implications of this treatise are that somehow a believer still has the old nature and old man present in contention with the new. A lot of this is backed up by reference to (Romans 7) implying that Paul is speaking of the conflict in the believer. Now upon reflection I cannot accept this duality (or schizophrenia). I do not believe that God has died for me to drag the corpse of my former life around. Let us observe:

1. The natural man is impotent to the things of God (1 Cor 2 v 14).
2. The old man is corrupt (Eph 4 v 22) and is to have been put off. He is also dead (Rom 6 v 6).
3. The old heart is deceitful (Jer 17 v 9), but the new heart is enscripturated and punishes (2 Cor 4 v 16). We now grow younger inside.

In all of this there is no hint that our past is any hindrance to our new creature or even to be considered an active reality in our Christian life. This is in full harmony with what we see as required of us in the Kingdom of God. In (Romans 7) Paul cannot be talking about a born again believer, but rather the conflict of sin in the life of the unregenerate man (the principle thrust concerns the law). Hence in (chapter 8) Paul makes the triumphant statement that Christ has indeed freed him from the conflict of sin and death (Rom 8 v 2), freed to serve.

Now we have not yet pinpointed the area of conflict. It is focused not in the old nature, the old man, the heart, or the natural man, for we are severed completely from these. The area of conflict is in the mind and understanding. When we are born again we do not lose the continuity of consciousness and knowledge with the past even though our nature is renewed (2 Cor 5 v 17).

The past is wiped out as far as sin is concerned, but not its memory or its foundation in false teaching. Our understanding must change (Col 1 v 9, Col 2 v 2) and our minds renewed (Eph

4 v 23). The conflict is not, I suggest one of natures, for we only have one nature, our conflict is a mental one in casting out the past consciousness of falsehood and error, renewing it with the righteousness of Christ (Eph 4 v 24). The problems that Christians face are due to the failure to accept and advance in the teachings of the kingdom, because they hang onto ideas and concepts which they held as unbelievers. As such they stifle the new creature bringing him into conflict with his new master.

So it is then, that Paul directs us into this area of renewal (Eph 4 v 20 ff) and highlights old ways as sinful and shows us the new substitutionary behaviour that benefits the new creature. It is only in and with these new patterns of behaviour that the Christian can truly be freed for a spiritual life (Rom 8 v 4, v 7, v 10).

We cannot allow any old ideas to synthesise with the new teachings of the kingdom, because it will weaken us. It will be an unequal yoke with unbelievers. So it is that Paul goes on to press home the attributes of the new creature as being essential to the entry into the Kingdom of God (Eph 5 v 1 - 5). The new order, he further goes on to illustrate, must penetrate the structure of our homes and interpersonal human relationships (Eph 5 v 21 ff). Finally he closes with a reminder that our warfare is not carnal but spiritual.

I wish to leave you with some points to consider concerning the Kingdom of God, also bearing in mind the Millennium in (Revelation 20 and see appendix 3).

1. There is only one reign of Christ in the New Testament and it is associated with resurrection (1 Cor 15 v 20 - 28). It has started and it is completed at the coming of Christ(v 24).
2. The New birth is essential for present entry into this kingdom (John 3) where the law of God still operates as a form of behavioural regulation but without the same application of punishment as in the Old Testament. Judgements have become supernatural (i.e. Annanias and Saphirra, at the Lords table).
3. In some respects the requirements of God (i.e. law) in the kingdom are harder than under Moses (Matt 19 v 7 - 10) (cf v 10). What we are seeing is that there was more to the mosaic law than legal retribution and equivalence of punishment (eye for eye etc). Human nature required that the law had tolerances because human nature was marred and incapable of running properly. In the kingdom the engine is repaired and the working tolerances can be reduced.

We see that the kingdom is, during the advance to the second coming, deliberately non-violent (John 18 v 36). It does not have to separate itself from the world by artificial distinctions (i.e. church, state). It is separate by definition as the Kingdom of God. There is no command to advance the kingdom by compromise, or by legal restraints (i.e. law of Moses)(cf Matt 23 v 13 ff). Spiritual change is the only goal that has lasting value, hence the term Kingdom of Heaven, which directs us to the heavenly rather than earthly rule.

DV We shall return after the break. If there are areas requiring more detailed exposition, let me know before I go away so that I can prepare.

CHURCH AND KINGDOM

Our studies in Revelation 20, a difficult passage, have led us over various denominational interpretations (post, pre, a-, dispensational). However, central to the theme of (Rev 20) is the subject of the reign of Christ (v 4) and it was from this that we went back to look at the reign of Christ or Kingdom of God in the New Testament. The fact that churches have lost sight of this doctrine has led to the ascendancy of the church as the representative institution of God upon Earth. From this idea the conflict has been considered as between church and state with many arguments as to whether the church or the state is the supreme body.

Now the New Testament knows nothing of church/state conflict. It does however speak of kingdom/kingdom conflict (John 18 v 36, Matt 13 v 38, Matt 12 v 22 - 28). There is no compromise between these kingdoms (Mark 3 v 24), no two masters, no double mindedness (Jas 1 v 8). I remind you how J. N. Darby conceived that the Kingdom was withdrawn (until the Millennium) and that the church was set up as a temporary body in a time of failure until the kingdom came. Had Darby accepted the New Testament teaching upon the Kingdom, then the whole foundation of dispensationalism would be destroyed. But what is the relationship between the kingdom and the church? This is best answered by reference to (Eph 5 v 24).

This whole passage in Ephesians, you recall, is about social structure under God. How are we to relate to one another! We often bring the idea of submission out of these verses (Ephesians 5 v 22, 6 v 1, 6 v 5). Let us also in fairness bring the equally important corollary idea of support, since submission has a passive connotation about it. The idea is not that people go around with heads hung down, quietly doing nothing, saying nothing, thinking nothing. Let us respectfully put this positive aspect of support into these verses. Wives support your husbands, children support your parents, etc.

The concept of support is essential in any structure physical or spiritual. If the Christian is a subject of the King Jesus, he will also be a supporter of the King. Now in this passage (Eph 5 v 24 - 25) Paul outlines the relationship that he has with the church as comparable with husband and wife (submissive/supportive roles). It is also here that the relationship between kingdom and church is made clear. The church is subject to the king (v 24) hence subjects of the kingdom are called church (those called out). Called out of one kingdom (Eph 2 v 1 ff) into another. Hence as a concept the church is secondary to the kingdom. Where the Kingdom of God breaks through, so to speak, the church will be found in its wake. Where the plough and the sower of the kingdom go through the world, the church grows in its furrows.

Because we have reduced the conflict to one between two kingdoms (Christ and satan), we must also begin to identify the differences over a much wider area. With the church only we get little further than religious issues. With the kingdom we move into the realm of public morals, civil law, social justice, etc.

It is inconsistent to hold that we can be obedient to the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of satan (two masters Luke 16 v 13).

1. Now we are in a position to comment on some of the questions that we raised earlier concerning Revelation 20. We now have a concept of the New Testament Kingdom of God. What is the New Testament concept of the K.G. Is it postponed? The answer is clearly NO. For the Kingdom is active and essential to the Gospel.
2. Does the second coming institute an earthly kingdom? NO it does not (1 Cor 15 v 20 ff). It is the completion of the kingdom.
3. Can the risen Saint share a new world with people in an Earthly state? NO There is no compromise in the Kingdom of God, no fellowship of light with darkness. Only judgement. Does the Kingdom of God advance by the application of mosaic law and civil government? NO The New Covenant is not based upon Moses' law (Heb 9 v 19 - 20) (Heb 10 v 1 ff).

The New Covenant is brought about by the Spirit of God (Heb 10 v 16 ff). The New Covenant functions on internal spiritual restraints in the individual rather than a series of outward prohibitions and rituals. The aim of the kingdom is to advance in the claims of Christ the king and the New Covenant not to propagate Moses. (Incidentally, when considering law it is important to see that to the Jew, law embraced all functions which we have artificially divided down into ceremonial, moral, civil (Acts 6 v 13 v 14)). It is not our duty to enforce Moses or Judaism (see Gal 2 v 11 - 20).

Now we are part way to understanding (Rev 20). The thousand years is the time (or perhaps part of the time) that Christ reigns (Rev 20 v 4 and 6). Christ's reign is seen in the New Testament as continuous. It commences with the resurrection (Acts 13 v 33 -34 and * 2 v 7 - 9) and continues to judgement (1 Cor 15 v 25 ff). As there are no other reigns or rules spoken of in scripture, the Millennium or 1000 years must be part of this period before the final judgement.

However it is not viewed from the Earthly point of view. We cannot escape the observations that (Rev 20) is particularly concerned with the people who had overcome (v 4), those who were martyred and those who had not bowed to the beast. Now I am not saying that the living Saints are not under Christ's reign or rule. I am observing that (Rev 20) is emphasising particularly the blessedness of those who has succeeded in overcoming (cf it is an illustration of (Rev 3 v 21, 2 v 26 - 28, 2 v 11 [cf 20 v 6])).

Revelation 20 is looking at the results of successful overcoming, victorious Christianity!

CHAPTER 49. Revelation chapter 20

The binding of satan in (Rev 20 v 1 - 3) seems to imply superficially that during the period of the Millennium that there is no satanic activity and that this is resumed at the conclusion (Rev 20 v 7 ff). It is of interest to note that the Greek word for bind (δέω = deō, Rev 2 v 20) is used in the Gospel (Mark 3 v 20 - 27 cf v 27). The context is very relevant, for it shows that Jesus in order to exercise His power over satan, particularly with respect to casting out of

demons, firstly had to restrict the power of their leader satan. It must be admitted that although Christ had clearly done this, it did not automatically follow that demonic activity had ceased universally (cf Matt 12 v 22 ff) and that later, possession is still around (Matt 15 v 21 ff).

Clearly the binding was not then designed to remove satanism but primarily to exhibit the arrival of the Kingdom of God (Matt 12 v 28). The kingdom was therefore possessed of authority and power such that satan was effectively bound in the presence of the King. Power is transferred to the citizens of the kingdom (Matt 16 v 18 ff).

So then, we have suggested, binding, is a limited concept. This is further born out from the story of the woman with the long term infirmity (Luke 13 v 10 ff). Satan had bound this woman for 18 years (Luk 13 v 16), but that did not mean that she was limited in every area of her life. She could walk, speak, reason and worship. She was however bound with a spirit of infirmity (v 11) a limited binding.

Now if we read (Rev 20) we will also see a limiting concept as the binding related to the deceit of the nations, or Gentiles. satan was to be limited as to what he could achieve among the Gentiles. The Hebrew (גוי = gôy) Gentile is first used in (Gen 10 v 5) to describe the descendants of Japheth, note in passing the presence of the Magog (cf Rev 20 v 8). Gentile (Lat Gentilis = one belonging to the same class) has in the bible a sense of those people outside of the nation of Israel (Is 9 v 1 ff).

The Israelites occupied a unique position in God's eyes, for out of all Nations God has chosen them as a peculiar treasure (Deut 9 v 1 - 6), but it was not to be the lasting state of affairs. Much perhaps to the annoyance of the Jews, God had plans to incorporate Gentiles into the kingdom. The Jewish attitude was exhibited in the prophecy of Jonah, who did not want to preach to the Gentiles. Yet the Old Testament was full of expectation for the Gentile (Is 2 v 2 ff, Is 2 v 7 - 8, Is 11 v 10, Is 42 v 6 - 7) and all of these in connection with the appearance of the Messiah.

At the time of Christ therefore, a change occurs and an expansion of the Kingdom takes place which allows the Gentiles to partake of Gods blessings. In the parable of the olive tree (Rom 11 v 16 ff) we see the grafting of the Gentiles into the historic stock of Israel. The very hardening of the nation of Israel (Rom 11 v 25) was to allow the "Fullness of the Gentiles" to come in (cf Gen 48 v 19).

The reluctance to receive the Gentiles as clean in Gods eyes is seen in the book of Acts (Acts 10 v 44 ff). In order to further convince Peter of the permanence and genuineness of the act, the Lord had given a vision to Peter (Acts 10 v 2 ff), which was intended to teach that strange races were no longer unclean (Acts 10 v 28). The apostles and brethren needed convincing of this (Acts 11 v 1 ff), but what a lovely attitude they exhibit. All the years of separation and contrary teaching are washed away in a flood of rejoicing and belief (Acts 11 v 18). What a practical example to all of us in immediate believing and acceptance of Gods way. This of course posed a problem for traditional Judaism and a council was set up in Jerusalem to reconcile the Jewish Christians with the Gentile Christians (Acts 15).

The reconciliation of Jew and Gentile is an important subject in the New Testament (cf Eph 2, Col 3 v 11, Gal 3 v 14). It was brought about on an unprecedented scale in full harmony with the predictions of the Old Testament. What had happened to make this possible? The binding of satan so that they were no longer deceived!

In times past they were lead astray (1 Cor 12 v 1 - 4) but Paul makes this powerful contrast between dumb idols and the spirit of God. Once upon a time, he says, you were dead and disobedient (Eph 2 v 1 + 2). Of a truth a great light has dawned upon the Gentiles. In the 'nunc dimittis' of (Luke 2 v 29 ff) Simeon quotes the prophecy of (Isaiah 49 v 1 - 6, cf v 6) where the servant of Jehovah, Israel personified in the Messiah, brings light to the Gentiles as nations.

Let me therefore update in conclusion, our present understanding of (Rev 20). The thousand year reign of Christ is seen primarily as existing in heaven where the Saints victorious enjoy their reward of ruling with Christ. This reign is co-existent with the Kingdom of God and the extension of the Kingdom upon earth. There is a limited sense in which Saints on earth share in the benefits of the rule of Christ from heaven. During this rule, or rather from the thousand years part of it (Not literal thousand years, we shall ask "why a thousand?" later). The power of satan over mankind globally in respect to keeping them in darkness and alienation from God is broken. This does not mean the total cessation of satanic operation but the limitation in one area. "Deceit of the Nations".

CHAPTER 50. Revelation chapter 20

FIRST RESURRECTION

The verses here (5-6) are not without some difficulty since they imply that death has a division of consciousness and that while some are raised others remain dead. Is this proof of soul sleep? We shall see later D.V. We cannot of course approach the subject of raising up, (ἀνίστημι = anistēmi - stand up (Eph 5 v 14)) without considering the subject of death and mortality in all its many aspects. We shall all make the transition to the world to come and some will physically die and decay in the earth. This certainty does not daunt the Christian, but I have met few Christians who have made any practical arrangements for the end.

The ant is provident (Prov 6 v 6 ff). She harvests, that is, makes provision for the future. Parents lay up for the children (2 Cor 12 v 14), Paul is not lazy. Have you made your last will and testament? If we make an attempt at ordered lives, let us not leave disorder at the end for others to clear up!

The first mention of death (Heb מוּת = mûth - to stretch out or prostrate) occurs in Genesis 2 v 17. It is spoken of as the punishment for disobedience. Etymologically it appears related to the Latin Mors and the English Murder. It must be noted that this promise to Adam was not fulfilled in immediate terms of physical death. The progress of physical dissolution was to happen (as a process) from this time (Gen 3 v 17 - 19).

In the absence of sin we can see no reason why Adam should have physically died, and

possibly transitioned in the manner of Enoch (Gen 5 v 21 - 24). However now the continuity of death is maintained by each generation from the one man, Adam (Rom 5 v 12 ff) (1 Cor 15 v 22). These verses are an important condemnation of organic evolution, for they show the unity of the human species from one root - Adam, just as the new race have unity in one man - Jesus Christ.

Now, are we right to assume that Adam did die in the day that he disobeyed and if so in what sense did he die. There is evidence that men are dead while they are alive. A man can be spiritually dead (Eph 2 v 1). Paul reviews this aspect of spiritual death (Rom 7 v 7 - 9) and teaches that it is only appreciated in a personal sense by coming to terms with Gods law. Therefore, we may say, that spiritual death or deadness is a human condition bought about sin and manifests itself in an inability to function lawfully. There can be no true response to the righteousness of God and His law in this condition. It prohibits all fellowship and good works. As we know, only Jesus frees us from this death, by His own substitutionary death (Rom 8 v 1) bearing the penalty of our crimes and instilling the power of new life.

To what extent was this appreciated in the Old Testament and what was their concept of death? There is no doubt that it was more often viewed from this side of the grave in physical terms and it is as if a veil was held over the grave to stop them seeing the glory and life to come (Ecc 9 v 7 – 10, Ecc 9 v 4 - 5). It was often viewed with morbid sorrow (Gen 37 v 35, Gen 42 v 38, 2 Sam 12 v 23).

But there can be no doubt either that the word of God held forth a glorious hope (Is 26 v 19 ff, Dan 12 v 2 - 3) of a resurrection, but little is clear about the state of man after physical death.

The Hebrew word Sheol (1st occ Gen 37 v 35) is used to describe the realm of the dead, or gravedom. From the root she'ôl (שְׁאוֹל) meaning to be still or quiet, as a grave. It was the place of the good and the bad (Psalm 9 v 17) (Pslam 16 v 10) and is variously rendered in the Authorised Version grave (Gen 37 v 35), hell (Deut 32 v 22), the pit (Job 17 v 16). The Greek equivalent Hades (Acts 2 v 27 Psalm 16 v 10) is derived from the word meaning “not to be seen”.

It is clearly wrong to limit Sheol/Hades to mean, hell the place of punishment. Christ's descent into Hades, was not a descent into the place of punishment for His work was FINISHED on the cross (John 19 v 30) and there was no need of punishment. Viewed from this side of eternity we may say, that although Hades is the world of those who have passed on there is within its bounds a place of eternal punishment.

So far, then we have seen that two types of death have occurred, physical and spiritual. As far as the Old Testament was concerned there was to be a future resurrection (John 11 v 24), but little of the blessedness and glory and consciousness of the future life was apparent until Jesus came.

There was in that far off time certain anomalies in the general run of events. Enoch and Elijah, Samuel's appearance at Endor and the raising of the dead child by Elisha (2 Kings 4 v 32). These events contained within them hope of continuity and the reversibility of the

process called death. They also gave hope of a consciousness after death and a continuity of existence albeit disembodied. Yet we await the clear statements of the New Testament to advance that hope. (Luke 16 v 19 – 31, Luke 23 v 43).

The terms undergo a change also and 'sleep' is applied to the Saints rather than death (Matt 22 v 52, John 11 v 11, Acts 7 v 60, 1 Cor 15 v 6 etc). Within this term is held not the idea of the cessation of existence, but of a continuity in rest. But are we right to accept as the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists that sleep means soul sleep? That the continuity of existence is one in which one is, so to speak, on ice? A cryogenic unconsciousness until one is bought back into existence and the blazing glory of Christ's presence.

I think not. The rich man and Lazarus clearly show this to be a conscious continuity. Viewed from this side the body is asleep, but from the other side, vibrant and joyful in the presence of Christ.

The shorter catechism of the Westminster Confession perhaps best summarises the position we have now arrived at.

Q.37. What benefits do the believers receive from Christ at death?

A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ do rest in their graves, till the resurrection.

Amen, this I believe.

We shall turn next time to the idea of resurrection and its relationship to the physical death and the spiritual death.

CHAPTER 51. Revelation chapter 20

RESURRECTION

Read 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

So far we have seen that death has two forms, natural and spiritual. In the Old Testament the doctrine was not fully developed, neither was its counterpart resurrection. In fact the state of man after death (physical) was not made completely clear until the New Testament.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is a basic teaching that should be grasped by all Christians (Heb 6 v 1 - 3). The reason is quite clear according to Paul (1 Cor 15). It is almost given in the form of a creed concerning Christ (1 Cor 15 v 3 ff) and had many witnesses to attest the fact. Paul delivers this message in the same authoritative way as he delivered the Lord Supper (1 Cor 11 v 23).

The resurrection of Christ is proof of a physical general resurrection (1 Cor 15 v 12 - 14).

Indeed if there is no such thing as a resurrection of the dead we can stop right there as far as Christianity is concerned, it is of no value at all! That is why I say, it is a fundamental teaching.

When Paul spoke to the Greeks at Mars hill (Acts 17) the climax of his speech is the resurrection of Christ (v 31) and upon the rejection of this Paul moved away from the crowd (v 32) although some followed him. Why is it so important? Because it has something to do with removing sin (1 Cor 15 v 16 - 19). As it is written in (Rom 4 v 25) delivered for our offences, raised for our justification. It was not merely necessary that Christ rise to prove that He was who He said He was, to prove His power over death. No He is raised for our justification, in order to administer to us the benefits of His work. He mediates the benefits of His death. (1 John 2 v 1, Heb 8 v 1 ff, Heb 9 v 14). He must live to do this. If Christ died for sin that fact alone does not quicken us (Rom 8 v 10 - 11, v 21 - 23). Gods power that worked in raising Christ from the dead now also works in us (1 Cor 6 v 14).

The resurrection of Christ you see is essential for its power, is the power, which works for us to bring us also to life. And it is here that you will observe the closeness in relationship of the physical and spiritual resurrection in the life of the believer.

In (Romans 7) Paul has been speaking of the law and sin and in consequence the inevitable death (Rom 7 v 10) that follows. He shows the hopeless inability to perform any good work in this condition and the utter despair that follows as death clings to its victim, pouring its wrath and condemnation over him. How can he escape? Only "through Jesus Christ" (Rom 8 v 1 ff). It is here that we see spiritual freedom from the inner conflict (Rom 8 v 5 - 9). Yes, brethren we are spiritually minded. Its tokens are life and peace (v 6). The same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead (and this must be a physical death since Jesus was never spiritually dead) this same spirit quickens our mortal bodies (v 11), that is completely renews us in all areas of life issuing in the final resurrection (1 Cor 15 v 22).

The fact that we are now being "quicken" is a sure token of the work that will be completed at the last day. The process has begun (Eph 2 v 5) (Col 1 v 13). I say begun, for although it is our status to be where Christ is (John 14 v 3) yet we are not fully entered into the total blessing of that day. If it were the same why should Paul wish to depart (Phil 1 v 23)?

We may say that we are justified by the death of Christ (Rom 5 v 1) but that is a far cry from being fully righteousness now. Paul strives to make that resection a reality (Phil 3 v 8 - 12). To use Paul's words he is in Pursuit. He has a promise and tokens of a promise, but the work is not yet complete. The same is true of salvation which is the end (goal) of our faith (1 Pet 1 v 9).

We share a unity with the church of God in all time (Rom 9, Heb 12 v 22) but we have yet to receive its fullness. Hence in glory, with Christ we may say that we have attained the resurrection. This is what John is speaking of in (Rev 20 v 5). The Saints in glory have the first resurrection.

In this state they are eternally secure from the second death (Rev 20 v 6) which is the

Eternal death in the lake of fire (Rev 20 v 14).

But what is the second resurrection? This I will suggest is the general resurrection (Rev 20 v 11) whence all men are brought from physical death (Dan 12 v 2). For the Saints this will be the time when we are clothed with our eternal bodies (1 Cor 15 v 51 ff).

So I will make the following summary for you. I take the first death to be spiritual for in this state men remain irrespective of physical death. This state continues after physical death for the unregenerate (Rev 20 v 5). The first resurrection commences in this life and is the spiritual quickening which reaches fulfilment in glory (Rev 20 v 5), hence believers do not die, but are viewed from this side of the grave as asleep. At the last trumpet, the graves are opened and the Saints united with their glorious new body (1 Thess 4 v 14 ff). The wicked are raised but not with a new body. In this state they are consigned to punishment and this is the second death (Rev 20 v 14). There is no second death for the Saint.

So then, we are near to the completion of our exposition of (Revelation 20). It is clearly a spiritual view of the working of the kingdom of Christ. If you like it is viewing the age of the Kingdom of God from a heavenly perspective. It sees the great advance globally of the Kingdom as it branches out from the Nation of the Jews to all nations.

The power of satan in the earth has formerly come from his deceiving power, the power to deceive about God and His government. From Heaven Christ reigns "our God reigns" and with Him reigns the Saints victorious over death. The "overcomers" sit down with Him as He strides to victory. But as we shall see there is one final event before He exercises the last judgement. We shall D.V. consider this next time.

CHAPTER 52. Revelation chapter 20

One of the things we must do as we approach the end of Revelation is to reflect on previous ministries, to consider whether we have been consistent. Going back to our two initial summary structures 1 and 2. I have found no reason to amend them and I maintain the Revelation is a series of views of the same event. In view of our protracted study, many of you may have lost the threads, particularly since we have gone into considerable detail to prove our position and for this reason D.V. I will endeavour to do a rapid overview when we conclude.

It is my growing belief that the scriptures are uncomplicated. This does not mean that they are without detail, figures of speech, typology and veiled references and so on. However, I maintain that there is a basic theme which the spiritual man may understand without going to the lengths of obtaining a D.D. I trust that you will have seen that despite the time it has taken to give an exposition of Revelation chapter 20, we have come to a simple view of the passage that remains in perfect harmony with the theme outlined in other passages of the scripture and with the book of Revelation itself.

You may recall our studies on the views of Revelation held by other groups of Believers (appendix 3). Clearly we differ with many of them! Are we correct? We are certainly not in a

majority position today but at one time our view was considered the most orthodox. I believe that we are generally correct because we are in full harmony with the other writers in the New Testament.

Peter doesn't expect an explosion of comings, goings and earthly kingdoms (2 Peter 3). For Peter the end is sudden, permanent and the Christian hope lies in the new world (2 Peter 3 v 13) not in a kingdom in this current evil world.

Paul is equally confident that the apostasy precedes the coming of Christ (2 Thess 2 v 3-4). There is only one coming of Christ as far as Peter and Paul are concerned and this is exactly what Jesus taught (Matt 24 v 3). There was only the one sign of Jesus coming not **comings**. That coming is sudden (Matt 24 v 50) and the changes in a twinkling of an eye (1 Cor 15 v 52) not protracted or in parts or with thousands of years separating the event.

You see, in all of the accounts outside of Revelation, there is no consideration of an Earthly Millennium. Christ comes, then comes the end and the new age of the new heaven and earth. Do you see why Peter and Paul do mention the Millennium, it is because it is in the heavenlies where the Saints now enjoy it with King Jesus? We have a position which is faithful to the word of God, without distortion or speculation.

This is how all of our studies should end up. And yet they often do not. Why? Because we do not give enough time to reading the word of God. We launch into ideas without a full grasp of the overall position. The "lift doesn't go to the top" and we don't have "all our oars in the water".

Get an overall feel for scripture by often reading it, then you can go into details.

CHAPTER 53. Revelation chapter 20

The world will approach the end with a period of renewed antichristian activity (Rev 20 v 7 - 10) and Christianity will be encircled (Rev 20 v 9) perhaps signifying isolation (Luke 21 v 20, Heb 11 v 30). Gog and Magog - the nations (Rev 20 v 8) are revived by satan who commences to gather them for the assault. I believe that we have seen this event portrayed elsewhere in Revelation.

In the events associated with the 6th trumpet (Rev 9 v 13) the prayers of the Saints (from the altar), are answered. The bound angels can go forth and do their work against the evil doers. The Euphrates upon which Babylon sat is seen to be the people of the world (Rev 17 v 15). Babylon sits upon the many waters (Rev 17 v 1), hence the symbol of the false church, worldly religion and all its effects governing the unsaved masses.

(Rev 16 v 12 ff) shows the same outpouring of judgement under the guise of the bowl. When I studied this earlier I suggested that the Kings from the east were gathered to the battle by the foul spirits and hence by implication associated them with evil powers. On reading this again, there may also be another interpretation. The east is associated with

righteousness (Is 41 v 2, Matt 2 v 2). Since the believer is a King Priest (1 Peter 2 v 9) (Rev 1 v 6), the passage might be implying that the battle is fought and the ground cleared for the coming of the Saints in glory.

In (Rev 9) we saw the army of God doing its work. In (Rev 16) we see the gathering of the unbelievers, called in (Rev 20) God and Magog. In other words the two chapters are looking at the same event from different perspectives. It is the same battle, the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16 v 16).

Our curiosity will lead us to ask if this battle has a carnal element. Will it be a World War 3? Every indication we have, suggests that rather than becoming more disunited and at war with each other, the kingdoms of the world will become more and more united. I remind you of our study in (Rev 13 v 1 - 9) entitled "The Mutant" (26 Jan 86). There we showed the unity of the world kingdoms in the guise of the beast (Rev 13 v 1) [Remember the 'sea' is the 'nations' (Rev 17 v 15)]. As we said then, the world governments are not disunited in principle, even though at present they appear so in practice. They are all satan's children and they are all doing his will (Eph 2 v 1). Never forget that. However benign they seem they are at one in their enmity with God Almighty. Although they will on occasion fight amongst themselves (No World War 3), they will not destroy themselves in a personal global struggle. They will grow closer together towards the end of the world, they will be more strongly united and of one purpose.

Human greed will command economic unity, under Babylon the Great (Rev 17, Rev 18 v 3). Underlying this is the common humanistic philosophy, exalting the glory of unregenerate man and fighting against the faith of the children of God (2 Peter 3 v 3 ff). They wax bold against the Lord denying the fundamental origin of our cosmos by God and mocking the promise of His coming.

Now it is not clear that there will be a time of unparalleled violence against Christianity. Rather it appears more as a gross mockery and a time of deceit (Matt 24 v 23). It think it likely that the world will have learned that violence rather than destroy Christianity, enhances it and strengthens it. What does not destroy us makes us stronger. Apathy and deceit coupled with sensationalism are far greater weapons. The false peace leads men into slumber and this is a constant warning (Luke 12 v 35 ff, 1 Thess 5 v 4 ff, 1 Peter 5 v 8, 1 Cor 16 v 13). This is equally tribulation.

In the day that the Lord comes, all will seem to all intents and purposes, normal. I don't think it will be any different from today. That is what makes it so deadly. People will be getting on with life, marrying, eating, perhaps down the pub drinking (Matt 24 v 36 ff). No great battle raging around them only the normal domestic comings and goings. Suddenly - Armageddon. The nations are gathered together without them even being aware of what is happening.

It is strange that although the unbelievers are satan's children they give him as much credence as they give our Lord. They walk as blind men in a dark world. It does not appear that they will be aware of events or the leading of the power behind them. That is your special privilege as believers to know this. Make it a matter of thanksgiving in prayer.

Armageddon is like the flood in its sudden coming (Matt 24 v 38 ff). The reaping of the wicked (Matt 13 v 36 - 43). It is not spectacular in its approach, only in its outcome.

The Christian must suppress his sighs of relief if we are correct in our appraisal of events. Watchfulness is the key if we are to be found ready at the glorious appearing of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And now all there is for us to consider is the final judgement and the new world, in our exposition of Revelation. It is a parallel story with the collapse of Babylon.

CHAPTER 54. Revelation chapter 20 v 11 - 15

THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

The day long awaited and foretold by Daniel (Dan 7 v 10 ff) in the Old Testament has arrived and with it the general resurrection of all mankind to give account of their works. The scene is declared also in the Gospel (Matt 25 v 34).

Books are opened and a single volume is opened (Rev 20 v 12). The books record the works of the dead. We shall return to consider whether the "dead" here is specific to the dead mentioned in (Rev 20 v 5), that is the unbeliever. The single volume "The Book of Life" I take to be the record of the names of the faithful (Rev 3 v 5, Rev 13 v 8, Mal 3 v 16).

The day will confirm each man eternally in the state that he exists in on that great day. The day will be one of great horror and weeping as dark secrets and crimes are revealed. Christians are encouraged to live in the world of light and open frankness (Luke 8 v 16 - 17). We are taught to acknowledge our faults (Jas 5 v 16 ff) and so can deal with our own error. The world in its sin will not do this, sinners like to develop ways of justifying sinful behaviour. There are for them degrees of guilt and corresponding degrees of punishment (Luke 12 v 46), seemingly also there are degrees of reward for the believers (1 Cor 3 v 9, the talents Matt 25 v 14 ff).

There are some practical thoughts that arise on this subject that are relevant for today. The last judgement is God's judgment - not man's judgement. Man's judgement counts for nothing then and it should not bother us either. We should not be concerned that men will abuse and misrepresent us (1 Peter 4 v 15 ff).

For this same reason Paul exhorts us that we should not apply the judgements of unbelievers in our personal dealings with fellow Christians. (1 Cor 6 v 1 ff) Unbelievers ultimately have no part in judgement other than as criminals.

Also Paul tells us that we as Christians are actively involved in God's judgement (1 Cor 6 v 3). This poses the questions:

1. Are we judged separate from the unbelievers?
2. Are we judged before the last day?

Peter has implied that judgement has commenced at God's house (1 Peter 4 v 17) and that the believer has passed through Judgement (John 5 v 24, Rom 8 v 1, Rom 5 v 1). The Saints as we have seen in (Rev 20 v 5) reign with Christ before the final judgement. How then could men, with an offence hanging over them, rule in righteousness (Rev 2 v 20 - 27, Rev 3 v 5, Rev 3 v 23)?

Therefore I am suggesting that the believer has been judged privately and separately from the mass of mankind and prior to the last day. For this reason the Saint can enter into the judgement with his Lord. Christ has delivered us from last judgement (Rom 8 v 1).

The privilege afforded us should cause us to live up to our status, "the high calling" (Phil 13 v 14). Now!

Since we have passed through judgement with Christ, there are further implications in dealing with each other particularly in love. It is a test of life (John 3 v 14, v 18). Christ dwells in each of us, so that concern for Christ is concern for each other and concern for each other is concern for Christ (Matt 25 v 35 ff). Each member has a function in the body (1 Cor 12 v 15). What Paul is in effect saying is - if the tongue exists it is in the interest of the tongue that the head exists. If the foot exists, it is in the interest of the foot that the hand exists (1 Cor 12 v 15) because the body is not one great foot. The body is diversity with unity.

Individuality is at a premium and is limited by the care for others. It is only through unity that we can realise the goals of Gods kingdom (Eph 4 v 1 – 14) I need you because I cannot function without you. You are part of me and I am part of you, as Christ is part of us all (John 17 v 22 ff).

The purpose of our meetings is to cement our unity, not to conform each other to our own standard, but be conformed to Christ. We have a group/family interest and although we may not have a wide ranging influence in this life outside of our own fellowship, we can perform our duty to one another! This is made all the more precious in view of what Christ has done for us and the standing he has given us.

But to return to our subject in (Rev 20 v 13), all the dead will be summoned. Those from the DEPTHS, from the Titanic, from the ocean depths, from the trenches of the Somme, from the Parish churchyard, from the ends of the earth. Now I questioned earlier whether dead (Rev 20 v 12) are the spiritual dead? This may be so in view of the fact that the Saints living with Christ have no reason for judgement. It may also be that the sea is not the literal ocean, but the mass of sinful mankind alive at the coming of Christ, in contrast with those in the grave - death and hades (Rev 20 v 13, Rev 1 v 18). The idea is plain enough, that none can escape the wrath of God.

It is all consigned to the eternal fire, not the fire of purgatory or purification, but the fire of torment. There they will live with satan the deceiver and all the wicked from every age. The classical picture of satan with a pitchfork tormenting sinners is not the biblical position. Satan is in torment with the sinners by the Lord Himself. The lake and its plume of smoke are the eternal monument of the faithfulness of God.

The community of the damned has not one constructive element (Rev 18 v 21 - 24), no music, joy etc. No release with time, each moment ever painful as the first moment of entry.

CHAPTER 55. Revelation chapter 21

We move now from the scenes of judgement to the more placid views of the New Order. We have in the sequences of the vision been here before (Rev 11 v 18 – 19, Rev 14 v 15 - 15 v 8, cf v 5). Only here we are drawn to greater detail. The tabernacle is now open and the mercy seat, Christ, plainly revealed to His people. You will recall that the judgement of the old order at the Crucifixion was also followed by the opening of the earthly temple (Matt 27 v 50 ff). We see the cyclic nature of Revelation.

Here also we have in essence the second Genesis (cf Gen 1 v 1 ff) with the manifestation of the new earth with the passing of the first earth (protos) or proto-earth. The word new (kaine not neos) is descriptive of the quality. It is used of Jesus' tomb (Matt 27 v 60) signifying something in existence but unused. It is also used of new wine (Matt 9 v 17) and the New Covenant (Matt 26 v 28). We are therefore not necessary to consider that the earth and heaven now before us are just created, rather that they come into use with the passing away of former things. Like a will already in existence.

This is something long promised and should be eagerly awaited by the Christian (2 Peter 3 v 11 - 13 v 14). This was the expectation of the Old Testament Saint (Is 65 v 17 ff, Is 66 v 22). There can be little doubt from Peter (2 Pet 3 v 11 ff) that we are not looking at a renovation of the existing universe or any modification to its temporal structure. We are shown something totally different. The Jehovah's Witnesses and many others view the Millennium as being an earthly reign of Christ and the restoration of an earthly paradise. Following Armageddon and judgement, they continue to live in the paradise regained. However the language of the scripture (2 Peter 3 v 11) is totally against this idea.

It is true that Isaiah used images of the present world in an ideal state to describe the new earth (Is 65 v 20 ff), but the Ezekiel also uses current images to describe the glory of the new Jerusalem and its temple (Ezek 40). This is really the idealism and quality of things to come in terms that would be understood in their day. I also do not think that we should presume that the earth will be round, have gravity, cyclic time or physical forms as we know them. It is a spiritual world with spiritual bodies (1 Cor 15 v 42 - 47). To some extent it defies description with our limited concepts, but primarily it is a place of order and righteousness. There will be no reproduction or marriage (Matt 22 v 30) and to some degree we shall be asexual. Such are the glimpses afforded to us.

The sea exists no more (Rev 20 v 1). Not the physical sea since we are not in a physical realm. The sea has in our studies symbolised the turbulent mass of humanity (Rev 13 v 1), from which men are brought to judgement (Rev 20 v 13). Hence this new heaven and earth is separated from the place where men held in judgement are kept - the lake of fire, the burning mass of the damned.

In (Rev 2 v 7) God's paradise and the tree of life are set before the victorious Saints. That which was lost to humanity by the sin of Adam is now given back by the second Adam. It is a place of worship where the tabernacle exists, but there is no need for sacrifice. It is unfortunate that all attempts at worship have been marred by sin. Even today we cannot appreciate or enjoy the full glory of true worship because of the effects of sin. Our trespasses need dealing with (Matt 6 v 12). The sacrifices of the Old Testament are often viewed as acts of worship, but this is perhaps a pagan concept. They were in reality obstacles to worship (cf all of the Leviticus and Lev 4 v 1 ff) a necessary step on the road to God. Men were continually bloodied and marked with their guilt. Of course our worship has the benefit of the single and perfect sacrifice of Christ (Heb 10 v 12 ff). Perhaps we lose sight of the magnitude of this offering in view of its encapsulation in one sacrifice. It does us well to read Leviticus to anticipate its scope for all manner of sin.

Here in heaven, confirmed in righteousness, robed in white, unable to sin, incapable of dying. We shall be transformed and transported into a realm of worship that I believe will be indescribable.

The distractions and trivialities of this age will not exist. The temporal labours to provide sustenance will have passed away. No mortgages, no heating bills, no phones, no cars, no sorrows. All the things that distract us this day and temper our worship will have gone. No Monday mornings only the eternal Sabbath. Yes, Sabbath every day!

You do not have to think about it for long to see why we need a new heaven and earth. This one is utterly corrupt and full of sorrow (Rev 21 v 4 - 5). I believe that as you grow in the faith and as these years advance you see it for what it really is. Casting his eyes back over his life Jacob saw it for what it was (Gen 47 v 9 - 10). Like his fathers he expected a better place (Heb 11 v 13 - 16).

The sweetness in a bitter cup, is the expectation of this new heaven and new earth. Do not hold on to this life. All the monuments raised to men are not permanent, but shall be destroyed in the fire. Even in death men cling on to a patch of this forsaken ground. How trivial, how sad.

Depressed and forlorn Christianity is a poor advert for the next life! Despite our limitations we must anticipate and show forth this hope from the earthen vessel (2 Cor 4 v 7 ff). Nowhere is Paul exhibiting defeat or retreat. He is positive. He is an overcomer. Go back and read again the letters of Jesus to the seven churches. It is not he who survives or he who endures or he who hangs in or he who casts out. It is he that OVERCOMES. The overcoming is done NOW that is today! These are present tenses. Don't expect to overcome things in other people's lives if you are not an overcomer in your own.

CHAPTER 56. Revelation chapter 20 v 9 - 17

We have before us the bride of Christ, the reality upon which all marriages should be based (Eph 5 v 25 - 33). There is a sense in which marriage should serve as preparation for this great event which nullifies all temporal relationships. It is at this point that "God puts

asunder" (Matt 19 v 3 - 6).

It should also encourage Christians, men and women to work towards Godly relationships since Christ strives to bring His bride into a fitting state to be married even before the marriage. The primary requirement of marriage must be, the commitment to God (Jer 3 v 14), thus the exhortation. The principle outlined in (Deut 7 v 1 - 4) must still hold true (1 Cor 6 v 14 - 18). A marriage without spiritual unity is a dangerous relationship. This does not mean that it will commence as a perfect relationship, otherwise Paul's exhortation would not be needed (Eph 5 v 22 and 25), but it is based upon a perfect religious principle. Perfect partners and perfect principles.

The bride is portrayed as the holy city, Jerusalem (Rev 21 v 9 - 10). Originally it was in earthly terms a pagan city, part of the inheritance given to Judah (John 10 v 1 1st occ.) inhabited by the Jebusites (Judges 1 v 21). It was captured by David (2 Sam 5 v 6 - 9) and became the national capital. It was the place chosen by God to be the place of His Name (2 Chron 6 v 5 - 11), becoming the focal point of national worship. In directing his worship in this direction, Daniel was acknowledging God revelation of Himself as centred in the purpose and history of the symbol (Dan 6 v 10). Even in captivity, the city still had a purpose. It was a focus, a centre of purpose.

But rather than become the permanent dwelling, it was in effect an assembly point for the people of God. It was to Jerusalem that Jesus came and died "outside a city wall" as the hymn says. It was the departure point also (Luke 9 v 29 - 31). As such it was the home of those who had been taken out of the bondage of the law, that is the new covenant, free men (Gal 4 v 21 - 26). No longer would the type be fouled, in as much as the inhabitants of Jerusalem were of mixed faith, but having been translated above, she is purged of all those unbelieving inhabitants (Heb 12 v 22 - 23).

It is interesting that we often consider cities to be made of stones and bricks, but there are many ancient cities that have no significance because they have no inhabitants (i.e. the cities of the Incas and Aztecs). The significance of a city lies in its inhabitants. Jericho had significance, not because of its architecture but because of its inhabitants (Josh 2 v 1 - 3). The spies of Joshua were not on an architectural site seeing visit, they were weighing up the people of Jericho (cf Josh 2 v 1, Josh 2 v 24). By the same reasoning we see the church as non-architectural but composed of people (Col 1 v 18). Churches are not houses, but churches can be in a house. So we arrive at the translation of the concept of Jerusalem as an earthly city, to a heavenly body, the bride of Christ.

The language here points us back to the vision of Ezekiel (Ez 40 v 1) and the Old Testament display of the heavenly city. Incidentally the word Jerusalem does not occur in Ezekiel from chapter 40 to the end, perhaps to encourage the people from looking for an earthly building. The time of Ezekiel's vision is also significant (1st month, 10th Day). The new year * was significant as it celebrated the Passover. Notice that the feasts and religion were connected in Israel unlike our own pagan New Year celebrations.

The 10th Day of Nisan (Ex 12 v 3) marked the choosing and preparation of the sacrificial Passover lamb. Hence Ezekiel draws the vision into its Passover position, thus following on

from the type of Christ. Heaven is only revealed to men after the Passover (do not forget that the Exodus followed smartly 4 days later). The 10th day was also the day when the people entered the Promised Land (Josh 4 v 19). If we are permitted to draw this imagery together we have the culmination of Gods redemptive work laid out before. Redemption both accomplished and applied.

The city is a perfect cube (Rev 21 v 16), so we may say that Gods people are full squares.

I suggest that this signifies, by the balance and symmetry, the stability and perfection of the people of God. The object associated with temple worship was (Square) cubic, and that was the "Oracle" or holy place wherein the ark of God was to reside (1 Kings 6 v 16 and v 20) 20 cubits cubed.

Again the Old Testament symbolised arrives at the reality with Christ dwelling in the midst of the people of God. Hence I take the words "having the Glory of God (Rev 20 v 11) as referring to glory present in virtue of God's presence, not the glory of the bride.

The number 12 is also thrown into the imagery, a number associated with the complete nation of Israel, or the twelve tribes. Perfection of order may also be implied by the foundations in which were the names of the twelve apostles (Rev 21 v 14).

There are twelve gates of this heavenly place with twelve angels outside. Peter does not appear at one of them! Neither is there a queue of people hoping to get in. People have some very strange unfounded concepts of this place.

CHAPTER 57. Revelation chapter 21 ff (v 22)

The imagery that is presented to us displays the purity and preciousness of the Kingdom of God. It is priceless. Malachi describes Gods people as a 'peculiar' or 'special treasure' (Matt 3 v 16 - 17). It is a glory derived from association with the Lord and a reflection of Himself. We can see, quite plainly stated, that the temples of old were mere figures of this, heavenly paradise (21 v 22).

Paradise is a term used 3 times in the New Testament. It was to be the abode of the repentant malefactor (Luke 23, 42 - 43). It was Paul's 3rd heaven (2 Cor 12 v 1 - 3) and it is the residence of the tree of life (Rev 2 v 7). Since the description of heaven before us contains the tree of life (22 v 2) we are justified in calling it paradise. The word paradise is supposedly of Persian origin and its Greek form Paradeisos means a park or garden.

The Greek version of the Old Testament (the LXX) calls the garden of Eden paradise or the garden of delight. (Gen 2 v 15) and there are parallels between the passage in Revelation and the description in Genesis which you can determine for yourself.

Again I take the "tree of life" or more properly wood of life and the fruit and leaves as being representations of spiritual properties of the kingdom. In the heavenly kingdom it is for

healing. In Proverbs (Prov 3 v 13 - 18) wisdom and happiness are associated with the wood of life. Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1 v 30) and I have no hesitation in making the Lord Jesus Christ by these associations, THE Tree of Life.

We must also lay waste in passing the Catholic concept of purgatory, the Romanist staging post. In their catechism (items 105, 106, 107 and 109) they openly state their beliefs. Their authority (2 Maccaabees 12 v 45 - 46), they also use (1 Cor 3 v 15). This would be in order if the law had made such a provision, but it did not. To the contrary affliction for the dead was prohibited (Deut 14 v 1) and no sacrifices were ordained to be offered for the dead. The weight of scripture is against any expectation for the wicked in death (Prov 11 v 7) and they are thus confirmed by death to a state of eternal unforgiveness.

It is a misplaced hope, however well meaning and we must conclude that Maccabees records an event unprompted by the Divine will. Indeed the passage before us in Revelation puts the matter beyond all disputation (Rev 21 v 17). Heaven is no place with an open gate for sinners, neither has God made any other provision than the lake of fire for them. Indeed, heaven and hell are the only abodes of the dead known to the Saint in scripture (in the New Testament). There is no middle ground.

The state of unrighteousness is eternally conferred upon men who persist in sin (Rev 22 v 11). Jesus teaches us as much in (Luke 16 v 19 ff). Father Abraham expressly forbids even the slightest comfort to be afforded to the man dead in his sin (w 24 - 26). If Lazarus, so close to God could affect no change in the state of the sinner, then I suggest that there is little the mortal man can do for those in the grave. On a practical point God will not be moved by tears.

If you have been studying this book with me for mere intellectual pleasure you will have missed its great theme. In fact I rebuke you for intellectual curiosity. I said at the beginning, that this was a practical study. It constantly rewards us for a practical achievement in the form of the 7 blessings hidden in its pages (Rev 14 v 13, 15 v 15, 19 v 9, 20 v 6, 22 v 7, 22 v 14). It gives us "strokes". In the summer holidays I was wrestling with the concept of law and its relationship with Gods Kingdom. On one of our family days out, I was granted a personal blessing on visiting an old church building. On one wall of the chancel was written the 10 commands. As I read I was caused to turn about and on the opposite wall I saw written the beatitudes (Matt 5). In that moment I saw the harmony of law and blessings. The beatitudes are the reflection of the law, the state produced in the man who already has the law functioning properly in his life. In case you ask yourself, why do this and not that, you have an answer. It will produce the greatest happiness (blessing) in your life if you function as God intended (Psalm 119 v 1). We must adjust our lives to run on Gods fuel, then we shall run both sweetly and joyously.

It is with this theme of joyfulness that we must finish this study and I will relate it to (Rev 22 v 18 - 19), the subject of personal integrity. Integrity means "wholeness", completeness and unbrokenness. My suggestion is that we are kept whole if we keep Gods word whole and that will keep us joyful. The Lord gave the same injunction in the law (Deut 4 v 2).

It is so precious that it acts as a shield (Prov 30 v 5 - 6) and so to dispense with it for

whatever reason is to lay oneself open to attack. I saw the headlines in the paper this week "Church to keep p**fs in the pulpit". The subtraction from Gods word has laid the Church of England under a serious attack that satan will capitalise upon.

Christians are not to be left or right "wingers", we are straight "on'ers" (Josh 1 v 7). However hard it seems at the time, it will yield its blessing in due time if we are obedient to the will of God. We have no right to modify Gods word to slake thirst for our own wrong ideas (Deut 12 v 32).

It was a feature of Aaron's robe that it was one piece, like a coat of mail (Ex 28 v 31 ff). It must not be capable of being torn, as seamed garments are. What a delightful picture of integrity. Our lives are not a patchwork of ideas drawn from different sources. Our religion is not a quilt of quaint sayings. It is unity, from conformity to the greatest pattern ever given for life. And so we see our Lord, the great Aaron of the people clothed with this garment of integrity. (John 19 v 23).

Integrity does not mean being honest at work and cheating on your wife. It does not mean paying your bills and cheating on worship. It does not mean loving your neighbour and robbing God. It does not mean believing some of the bible.

Integrity for us is the biblical concept of spiritual wholeness by an open submission to the revealed will of God. We started with a blessing (Rev 1 v 3) and we shall finish with that blessing if we heed (Rev 22 v 18 - 19).

Rev 22:19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. Rev 22:20 He who testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Rev 22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

APPENDIX 1

THE CHERUBIM TAKEN FROM STUDIES IN EXODUS BY M.A.W.

EXODUS Chapter 25.

THE CHERUBIM PART 1.

Before we approach the subject of the Cherubim, you may wish to examine the view of some expositors (see bibliography at the end of the appendix). Clearly there are considerable differences among godly scholars in delineating these figures that appear firstly in Genesis. To begin, let us look at the circumstances surrounding their first appearance.

CREATION:

We go back to the creation and consider its purpose which I suggest was ultimately **spiritual**. In (Gen 1 v 14) the celestial orbs, the sun and moon, are given to regulate worship (perhaps the creation of light before the light bearers emphasises this fact, namely that their principle purpose was for worship). Mans' duty was to glorify God (Is 43 v 7, Rev 4 v 11 A.V. see also Westminster Shorter Catechism Q1). As Jesus Christ is Lord of creation (Heb 1 v 2), service to the Creator is measured in the obedience of faith (John 10 v 27).

TEMPORAL CREATION:

The creation is a temporal manifestation of the Glory of God, for "The heavens declare..." (Psalm 19 v 1), and it was to reflect and magnify that reality that He infused His glory into it.

Adam and Eve were the last creative act of God, to whom He entrusted this handiwork (just as the new creation is given to Christ (Eph 1 v 22)). As we are aware, there are many parallels between the old and the new creation.

There were three principal duties (Gen 1 v 28) given to our first parents.

1. Bear fruit and increase,
2. Subdue,
3. Dominate.

These may perhaps be summed up in Genesis (ch 2 v 15) in the "labour" and "guardianship" of the garden! The three duties have a Gospel counterpart (Matt 28 v 28).

1. Disciple internationally,
2. Baptise,
3. Teach Observances.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION:

The laws of God are pedagogic (they act as a tutor), to bring us to Christ (Gal 3 v 24) and temporal forms are indicative of spiritual values (1 Cor 9 v 9). Temporal forms teach spiritual truth (Acts 10 v 14), and they are a measure of our spiritual status and conformity (Rom 5 v 1 - 4).

I particularly want to look at the two aspects of DOMINION and SUBDUING. **Dominate** (Heb. Radah is used of slavery and ownership i.e. Lev 25 v 43, 46, 53). In Numbers (ch 24 v 9) it has a Messianic significance, it denotes government within a law framework. In what context then is the word **subdue** (Heb. Cabash) used? To subdue what? The root of this word Cabash means "to tread" or "knead", so how do we apply this word to a creation that is being "dominated"? The word has a powerful meaning (Micah 7 v 19) to subdue iniquities, (Neh 5 v 5) to bring into bondage, (Esther 7 v 8) to force the Queen. In Numbers (ch 32 v 20 - 24) it is used of subduing Canaan (remember that Canaan was subdued as part of God's judgment (Deut 9 v 5)).

From the use of the words SUBDUE and DOMINATE we can deduce that, subdue is the practical exercise of power, and domination is the act of governing following subjugation. This implies that a man had to go out and exercise his God given power to bring the creation into subjection to God. (The picture of Adam and the animals lying about together has not the slightest warrant from the Genesis narrative). There is again a similarity to Christ's subjugation and dominion (1 Cor 15 v 27, Heb 2 v 8 - 9). Looking at the task God gave Adam, on a practical level, it was to unify creation and put it in its true order (man himself also submitting to God).

I go on to suggest that a further area of subjugation exists. It is the realm that is fighting against the task of Adam, and it is the realm of evil powers. There are in the scriptures good and evil angels. In various ways they are involved in the cosmic conflicts of mankind, being normally invisible. Yet by faith we see in the scriptures their vast involvement (Dan 10 v 20, Josh 5 v 13, Matt 26 v 53, 2 Kings 6 v 17). They are involved in national strife (Dan 10 v 20). In the Church angels are ministering spirits (Heb 1 v 14), aiding Saints (Acts 12 v 7) and governing assemblies (Rev 2 v 1).

In scriptures, devilish powers may possess animals and men, and in Job it is the devil who uses the power of "nature". For the Saints good angels fight and appear to use the powers of heaven (Judges 5 v 20). Hail in Revelation (ch 16) and tempest may be their weapons, also plagues proceed from angelic hands.

To deny angels is to follow the Sadducean error (Acts 23 v 8) and be as blind as Balaam (Num 22 v 25 - 33). Angels gave the law (Acts 7 v 38), led the Exodus, and smote the Egyptians. In life or death they minister to our needs. Jude 9 shows the devil was after the body of Moses, but what great care the Lord has even for his remains, and how much greater care for the soul (Luke 16 v 22)?

In Christ's ministry on earth we see direct conflict with the devil and his angels, and it is Christ's purpose to destroy the devil and his works (Heb 2 v 14), yet the real field of conflict is not temporal according to (Eph 6 v 12). The effects of sin are seen in flesh and blood, true, but the focus of the conflict is in the heavenlies and these rebels are Christ's creation (Col 1 v 16) and will be subject to His jurisdiction (Eph 1 v 20).

Our weapons are not carnal (2 Cor 10 v 4; Eph 6 v 14 is the list of weapons), but our main armament is the Word of God (we must see its power, for by it God summoned a universe, sent the devil running and made His Son the incarnate representation of Himself). It is Christ

the Word who comes in His might to rule (Rev 19 v 11 - 14) and we too, by the same word.

In their little camp in Eden, God was teaching Adam and Eve the obedience of faith, but the devil encouraged them to outrun God. From this failure Adam was ejected into a world labouring under a Divine curse. God accepts no excuses for failure, not even under claims of ignorance!

It is at this juncture that the **Cherubim** "appear", and the sword is between the creatures, but there is no mention of their holding it (Gen 3 v 24). Their duty is to "guard" the way to the tree, not specifically the tree, but the singular **way** there. Adam failed in his guardianship and these figures (the Cherubim) now replace him. How easily might God have removed the tree, but it was not His purpose to prevent man forever going on "the way" to "the tree" (Rev 2 v 8). "The way" is to be open to His elect!

Thus in Eden we have three things typifying Christ.

1. The way.
2. The truth. (Tree of Knowledge etc.)
3. The Life (Tree of Life cf John 14 v 16). The Cherubim appear as the guardians of Adams' realm, which is a picture of Christ and His kingdom. The Cherubim and the sword are in place of Adam.

We might here infer that the Cherubim are angels, but in (Rev 5 v 11) they are mentioned separately. This would imply that they are some other facet of Gods handiwork.

The four living creatures comprising the Cherubim are also portrayed in Ezekiel (1 v 5) as being one body. Four faces on the body (Fig 1), one from the "ceremonially clean" and three from the "unclean". I postulate the four faces are the representatives of the cattle, the wild beast, the birds and mankind. God dwells in the midst of creation.

Perhaps in these creatures, we find the blue print for creation since they exist in heaven, whence Moses got his orders to portray them.

In (Gen 3 v 24) we observe that the creatures do not just sit at the gates of Eden, but that they tabernacle (Heb. SHAKAN whence "shekina"). Similarly Christ tabernacled with us and showed us the way to the tree. This is something the Cherubim would have done until they were moved from their post, and that was to mark the place of approach! This may then have been the predeluvian ('before the flood') focus of worship, the tabernacle of the Cherubim.



Figure 1. The Cherubim.

So far there is the suggestion that the Cherubim have:

1. Some representative function of life. (Gk ζῶν Zoe).
2. Guardianship in place of Adam.
3. Some typological duties connected with Christ's person and work.

We recall from our list, how commentators have singled out one particular function mentioned above, to the exclusion of the rest. Thus we must take care, it is not a simple subject.

Here are some questions to answer, relating to the Cherubim, for your personal study.

1. In Ex 25 v 19 they are portrayed as part of the mercy seat. How?
 - a. Appendages, or as
 - b. Integrated with the capporet (Hebrew for cover or "mercy seat") as one piece of gold? Verse 20 speaks of "out of" and "upon", but just what does that mean?
2. "Thou hast redeemed us" (Rev 5 v 9). What is the textual support for this verse?
3. In Revelation chapter 6, who do the creatures summon?
 - a. John or
 - b. The four horsemen?
4. Is "and see" textually correct?

These four questions are highly relevant to the exegesis of the Cherubim.

THE CHERUBIM PART 2.

In conclusion to the last ministry I suggested that in Genesis the Cherubim have

1. Some representative function of life.
2. Guardianship in place of Adam.
3. Some typical duties connected with the person of Christ.

The question of whether the Cherubim are actual creatures, emblems of the church or a type of Christ (by type, I mean a symbol or emblem that can be associated with the person and work of Christ) remain to be seen. There are some points in favour of the type of Christ.

1. Animals may be representative of the power and work of God (Ex 19 v 4; Eagle. Rev 5 v 5; Lion. Lev 4 v 10; Ox).
2. The unity of the creation in one body. (Eph 1 v 10) shows that creation has a destiny and unification solely in Christ. The reason is, that He is the author of creation (Col 1 v 16) and the purpose of creation is for Him (Col 1 v 16). The structural unity of

creation is brought about by His power (Col 1 v 17). The meaning of creation therefore cannot be discovered apart from Christ. Hebrews (chapter 11 v 3) shows creation as an article of faith and this verse destroys the concept of progression from material state to another material state ad infinitum.

3. The scriptures show in the New Testament that Christ is the last Adam and so Christ (perhaps typified in the Cherubim) is a better substitute than say angels (1 Cor 15 v 22, Rom 5 v 14).

However, these are suggestions that come to mind and there is a lot more scripture to review, but before going on, I wish to draw your attention to a principle of interpretation, one which we often use without stating. It concerns the nature of redemptive revelation. **God does not back track but continually advances.** In other words there is a sequence of information which supersedes or embraces previous information, but never re-establishes what it has made obsolete e.g.

1. The nature of sacrifice (Heb 9 v 8 ff) which also speaks of the tabernacle being changed.
2. The pedagogic law (Gal 3 v 23).
3. The annulling of the Levitical priesthood and the establishing of the priesthood of Melchizedek (Heb 7 v 11 - 18).

There are other examples you may bring to mind.

The progressive revelation is drawing us onward to Christ who is the **focus** of the word of redemption, the alpha and omega of creation. (Col 2 v 16 - 17). The fact that God was clearly kept "before" His people is shown in the ritual focus at Jerusalem, which Daniel addresses in his prayers (Dan 6 v 10). God was clearly accessible even "in" or should I say "from" captivity. Bearing in mind that the people have been interred for the 70 years and the temple is in ruins without a practising priesthood, Daniel still has his bearings.

The two things I have mentioned;

1. that Gods revelation of redemption is progressive or as Dr. T. T. Shields stated "God does not walk backwards" and,
2. that Christ as consummate Lord of the Kingdom of God is the eschatological (eschatology is the study of "last things") goal of the Father, must guide us as we consider the meanings of any variations in imagery of the Cherubim. Further we must also endeavour to find a reason for changes (i.e. when the covenant of the Lord is given at Sinai does it supersede the covenant to Abraham or does Abrahams covenant embrace the law? What is the historic event that is taking place? (Galatians 3 v 17 suggests the fulfilment of the prophecy of captivity).

THE CHERUBIM AT THE EXODUS.

From Eden, we move to the tabernacle in the wilderness for our next manifestation of the Cherubim (Ex 25 v 18 - 20). The question I raised last time on (v 19) as to whether the Cherubim are made out of the same piece of gold as the capporet or that their position is on the end depends on the interpretation of "... at the two ends " (cf Ex 37 v 7).

I would say for the present that this answer must wait until the conclusion, for if the Cherubim typify Christ then the idea of their unity, made of the same material and "one with the mercy seat" is appropriate. If not Christ, then their detachment from the mercy seat is understandable.

The attitude of the Cherubim is of interest,

1. they stretch their wings over the mercy seat and,
2. turn their faces towards the mercy seat. This attitude has often been considered to indicate humility and adoration for Christ, but is this the case? The LXX (The Septuagint or greek version of the OT) looks at the word as being "shadowing" (κατασκιαζοντα) which is the rendering in (Heb 9 v 5).

In the Hebrew the verb is **Sakak** (from which 'succoth'), which we have come across before in connection with the "booths". It means to plait or interlace (as branches), or to protect, restrain, hide, hedge in. In (Job 38 v 8) the word means to "shut up", in the Psalms (5 v 11) it is rendered "protect", as also in Psalm 91 (v 4) the thought of protection is given, This I would suggest is the attitude of the Cherubim on the mercy seat. They are protecting the throne of God and all that it symbolises and contains. This is in harmony with their role in Eden to protect "the way" to "the tree" of Gods garden kingdom. Again, we also see them as guardians of the law of God and to this they intently gaze (in John 17 v 6 the Saints are credited with doing this).

The appearance of this "creature(s)" in Exodus, is at the time of the foundation of the kingdom of Israel and the national worship of the people of God (Ex 19 v 6). The throne of God is now established in the midst of His people, not at the gates of Eden. God is now with us. Bear in mind the typology of Exodus (19 v 6) which has its highest attainment in the church of God with both Jew and Gentile (1 Pet 2 v 9).

It is also necessary that the people be reminded of their sin and the holiness (separation) of God. The Cherubim do this by calling to mind the fall and failure of man. The sacrificial system according to Hebrews (10 v 3) does the same thing.

The Cherubim are not limited to the mercy seat. They appear in the fabric of the tabernacle (Ex 26 v 1) and the veil (Ex 26 v 31). It would seem that the basic fabric fine linen (Shesh, so called some think for its 6 strands, see the six down strokes in the Hebrew letters) had the figures woven into it in the three colours.

1. Blue (symbolising law, Numbers 15 vv 38 - 39),
2. Purple (Kingship/sovereignty, John 19 v 3),

3. Scarlet (sin/atonement, Isaiah 1 v 18).

The figures are of "cunning work", the work of an exquisite craftsman. (This could point to Christ's work for the Church, Eph 2 v 10).

Again in our typology we are drawn heavenward to consider Christ prefigured here. The tabernacle is **the fabric** in particular, though as a generalisation 'tabernacle' can mean the whole structure. There is according to Hebrews (9 v 11) a better tabernacle and in chapter 8 (v 2) the true tabernacle. So the tabernacle anticipates the work of God in heaven. Christ in (John 1 v 14) "tabernacles", and Christ's body is a shrine (John 2 v 19 ναός- naos). God was in Christ (2 Cor 5 v 19) and the veil rent was His flesh (Heb 10 v 20).

We cannot again escape the association of the Cherubim with the person of Christ, but again they may be associated in the imagery as aspects or attributes of Christ, and again the possibility of the association of the redeemed comes before us, being part of His body.

THE CHERUBIM AT THE TIME OF THE KINGS.

When we come to the time of king Solomon and the building of the permanent sanctuary of God we see the Cherubim are structurally modified. Historically we see the nation at peace having extended its frontiers to the limits that God promised Abraham (Gen 15 v 18, 1 Kings 4 v 21). This is the signal to build the house of God (1 Kings 5 v 3, see New Testament fulfilment in Luke 1 v 69 ff).

Outside of this boundary are the Nations which if they submit to the God of the Israelites might enter in to fellowship with them (Deut 20 v 10 - 18). I also think that there is imagery in this temple which concurs with the prospect of Gentile conversions, for the Cherubim in 1 Kings (6 v 23) are much larger, and they are now made of olive wood and gold overlay. The word for olive wood, however, should more correctly be "wild olive" (as in Isaiah 41 v 19 and Neh 8 v 15).

I think we have here the pattern of unity in Christ of Jew and Gentile, for Romans (11 v 17) sees the **believing** Gentiles as a wild olive.

Again (in Solomon's Temple) the Cherubim tower over the ark of the covenant, but there is now no mention of the Cherubim **on** the mercy seat, for they (the capporet or covering lid) appear to have disappeared from the pages of the revelation. Why?

THE CHERUBIM PART 3.

So far, we have traced the Cherubim to Solomon's temple and I draw to your remembrance again the two points of interpretation from the last study:

1. The progressive revelation of God's word does not lead to the reestablishment of what has been removed (i.e. God does not walk backwards).
2. The goal of the kingdom is the triumph of Christ to the glory of God. The interpretation of all history will ultimately be seen in God's purpose in Christ. Thus we expect to see principally, prophetic revelation of Christ (Rev 19 v 10, 1 Pet 1 v 11 - 12, Gal 3 v 24, Col 1 v 17).

In 1 Kings (6 v 23) we saw that the Cherubim were made of olive wood overlaid with gold, more accurately **wild** olive wood. Paul uses the wild olive to describe the Gentile (Rom 11 v 17). Solomon's' temple is the highest form of ritual service practised under the Old Testament and much more magnificent than the second temple (Post exilic, that is, the one built on the return from the exile {captivity} in Babylon which in its glory was a cause of sadness (Hag 2 v 3, Ezra 3 v 12) and like the tabernacle in the wilderness, Solomon's' temple portrays heaven, the dwelling place of God.

The focus of Solomon's temple, as with the tabernacle in the wilderness, was the Holy place in which was the Ark of the Covenant. In 1 Chronicles (28 v 11) the Holy of Holies is called the "house of the mercy seat". I am not satisfied that the ark was with its capporet when it was brought in, for clearly the contents were visible (1 Kings 8 v 9, though perhaps by special revelation). The rod (Aaron's) had gone, and so had the manna.

The **rod** (Num 17 v 1 - 4) confirmed the authority of the Levites. The **manna** typified Christ (John 6 v 48) so not only did the Sabbath preserve the manna, the ark of the covenant did as well! I believe this information is prophetic, for these symbols are superseded by Christ alone (Hallelujah!) His priesthood and His life (the true bread). This happened at the resurrection, whence also the symbol of the wild olive, now in the Holy of Holies, would intimate Christ's association with the nations.

As with the fabric of the tabernacle, the Cherubim appear on the walls of the temple (1 Kings 6 v 29), with palm trees, the symbol of righteousness (Ps 92 v 12).

In (1 Sam 4 v 13 - 18) the disappearance of the ark and Cherubim coincided with the end of the period of Judges. The establishment of the kingdom under David sees the way clear for the Cherubim to reappear in Solomon temple, and as we shall see again from Ezekiel, the failure of the dynasty of Judah sees the Cherubim depart.

I want to look at this terminal period of the kings of Judah, so as to get the historical perspective, before examining the accompanying prophecies. Why was the great nation of Israel ejected from the promised land? Simply, because of "unfaithfulness", (1 Chron 9 v 1). Jeremiah specifies the period as seventy years (Jer 25 v 10 - 12). This will give the land seventy years of Sabbaths (2 Chron 36 v 21), so I infer that the nation had failed to keep the

seventh year Sabbath (specifically, land Sabbaths Lev 25 v 4) for a period of 490 years (70 x 7), the exact period spanned by the kings of Israel from David to Jehoakim.

The Sabbath was critical for the maintenance of the kingdom (Jer 17 v 24). From our studies on the 4th Commandment, we saw the Sabbath in its antitype (ultimate fulfilment) as the believers rest in God (Christ, Heb 4 v 9), that is the ultimate fulfilment of the eternal covenant in perfect peace and unity with Jehovah.

Sabbath keeping was essentially "resting with" and "to" God, yet the nation of Israel did not want this. The outward unfaithfulness in Sabbath breaking marked the inward apostasy of the heart, to righteousness and law. God thus deprived Israel of the land of rest but gave the land its own rest.

The right to the kingdom is given over to the Gentiles (Jer 27 v 5 - 6). This implies that the **de jure (by right)** government is the **de facto (in fact)** government (a king 'de facto' is one actually in possession of the throne, a king 'de jure' is one having the right to the throne but not the possession). National ownership is clearly defined by Gods providence. Not only is the Gentile king given land, he is given the creation (Jer 28 v 14).

The captivity acted in part, as protective custody (Jer 21 v 8), for to have fought Nebuchadnezzar was to have fought against God (cf Is 10 v 12 - 15). Oppression must be clearly interpreted by reference to Gods council, for ultimately, good and evil must be seen from the Divine stand point (Gen 50 v 20, Matt 16 v 21 - 23). This is Gamalian wisdom (Acts 5 v 39).

THE CHERUBIM AT THE TIME OF THE CAPTIVITY.

Jeremiah writes to the residue in Babylon (Jer 29 v 1) and makes plain that God will make them stay the full term, contrary to the false prophets (Jer 28 v 3). How gracious of God to give advice to preserve their health (Jer 29 v 5) for even in judgement, God is merciful to His elect. David knew this (2 Sam 24 v 14). The captivity did not take the "heat" off of the Jews because captivity was to serve as a penitentiary, where away from the distractions and adulteries of the world, the people might take stock of their lives. God has not left them alone, He sits with them and through Ezekiel (meaning: God is strength), He chides, rebukes, entreats, promises, blesses and heals.

Ezekiel's task, like all prophets, most of all our Saviour (the standard of all prophets Deuteronomy 18 v 18), is not glamorous. He is ridiculed and abused, suffering personal tragedy for the people of God, even no doubt in the spirit of Moses (Heb 11 v 25 - 26). Ezekiel loses his wife (Ez 24 v 15) to teach Israel a lesson. One again "of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb 11 v 38). Yet sustained by the presence of God, he does not falter, and like Jeremiah a thousand miles away, he is faithful and thus totally successful.

Tradition holds John's Revelation to have been written from captivity (Rev 1 v 9), though it is not certain. There are however, many similarities in the two prophecies of "Ezekiel and Revelation". I think that Revelation must be read hand in hand with Ezekiel for there is

parallel imagery, and again, the Cherubim.

Ezekiel is not wholly chronological (see chapters 25 - 32) and neither is the book of Judges (from chapter 18 ff). Prophecy does not always unfold in a linear fashion, its purpose of course not being solely to define events in order. Bear this in mind when reading Revelation and ask yourself why indeed it should be in order?

Ezekiel dates his visions from the captivity of Jehoiakim. This is the seventh year of the seventy years. The prophecy deals with the fifth year (ch 1 - 7), sixth year (ch 8 - 19), seventh year (ch 22 - 23), ninth year (ch 24 - 25) start of the seige, eleventh year (ch 26 - 28) fall of the temple, and so on until the vision of the temple (ch 40 - 48).

Why in the middle of his prophecy, does Ezekiel turn to the nations? According to Jeremiah (27 v 2 - 3) they are confederates of a Judah, so Judgement starts at the house of God and ripples out.

Ezekiel takes pains to point out that the judgement is for individual sin. In Ezekiel chapter 18 (vv 1 - 36) the prophet makes it clear that it is not National, but individual judgement. The fathers and sons are judged for their own sins and this is emphasised in Ezekiel (14 v 14) and from out of the bones of a judged people (Ez 6 v 4), a resurrection of the Spirit of God will take place (Ez 37), whence follows the temple vision. Why show this temple that never was built on earth (and perhaps more importantly, **never was commanded to be built on earth**)? Perhaps because;

1. It lays forth a massive vision of true worship under the symbols of the first covenant. In other words, it was in the symbolism and ritual that they could understand and relate to. This would have been of comfort to those in exile in Babylon at the time and more understandable than showing the true worship in the future forms that it eventually achieved in the church of the NT.
2. It is a revelation of holiness to convict of sin (Ez 43 v 10) and thus I suggest, encourage righteousness. It is through the revelation of Jesus by the Holy Spirit that we too are reprov'd (John 14 v 26).

The Cherubim of Glory (Heb 9 v 5), I suggest, inspires the same vision of God's majesty, calculated to create the thoughts of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence of the triune God, to show that in captivity, God was sovereign and Lord over history. History does not depend on man for its meaning, but upon God. God rules even though His people may fail.

The Cherubim who appeared at the ejection from Eden, now appear at the ejection from Canaan (elsewhere called the garden of God, Joel 2 v 3). Read for yourself the first chapter of Ezekiel, and witness the explosive appearance of God in the midst of His Cherubim from the north, the biblical compass point of judgement.

THE CHERUBIM PART 4.

Ezekiel and Daniel, the two contemporary prophets, display two aspects of Divine Sovereignty.

Daniel is famous in Babylonia as a righteous youth (Ezek 14 v 14). Ezekiel confirms the genuineness of Daniel as a contemporary (Ezek 28 v 3), and ranks him with Noah and Job. Jerusalem has not yet fallen (Ezek 14 v 21) and it would appear that this section of Ezekiel (see Ezek 8 v 1) is in the sixth year of Jehoiachim's captivity. From Daniel chapter one I suggest the prophet is in his mid 20's, when his 'righteousness' is spoken of.

Daniel means "God is judge" and Ezekiel (Jehezkeel YAH + Chatzak) I remind you means "God is strength". In Deuteronomy 3 (v 28) the root Chatzak is used for encouragement. There, in the names of the prophets is a key to the contents of their respective revelations. Daniel deals with Gods judgements in the kingdoms of men (in the Jewish canon, Daniel is in the Hagiographa {Psalms, Proverbs, Job etc.} not the Prophets). Ezekiel deals in part with judgement, but the overall aim is to show forth the glory of God to encourage the people of God to righteousness (cf Ezek 43 v 10).

Daniel remains unpolluted by captivity (Dan 1 v 8). He leads a life punctuated with prayer and by wisdom declares the visions of God concerning the kingdoms of the world (cf Dan 2 v 37). Perhaps impressed by this, Nebuchadnezzar makes an image totally of gold and declares himself to be god (Dan 3 v 15), but even fire cannot destroy the servants of God (Dan 3 v 25). Nebuchadnezzar is in consequence reduced to a beast (Dan 5 v 24) in order to learn the sovereignty of God (Dan 5 v 34) and Belshazzar learns the same lesson in Chapter 6. In the split neo-Babylonian Empire under Cyrus and Darius, the lesson goes on, God and His servants cannot be defeated. The message of the prophecy may be summed up in the words of Daniel (ch 2 v 44, ch 4 v 32).

In Daniel we are seeing the formative process of providence, called history, acted out. In Ezekiel we are taken behind the scene as it were to see God in His glory among His people, working His purpose out.

Ezekiel leads us in chapter 1 (v 1) to a scene of the heavens opened and the visions of God. From the North, the direction of Divine visitation in judgement, appears the fiery vehicle in the midst of which is one like unto the son of man. The first vision occurs in the 5th year, 4th month, 5th day (vv 1 - 2) and the second vision (ch 8 v 1) comes in the 6th year, 6th month, 5th day. (It would not appear from the time interval that Ezekiel had **literally** fulfilled the prophecy of the 430 days{see chapter 4 v 5}).

In the first vision (see Fig 1) the creatures are simply (only) designated the "living" in the second vision the term Cherubim is applied (cf 10 v 1) and is manifestly the same that was seen in chapter 1 and 2 by the river Chebar (cf 10 v 20). Why are they not called Cherubim in the first vision?

The etymology of cherub appears somewhat uncertain, but I think that there is evidence for

it being a generic term expressing a quality (see Brown Driver Briggs Lexicon: to be gracious). This would explain why the cherub of Ezekiel (ch 10 v 7, note that the definite article is used) appears to be the Ox (compare Ez 1 v 10 with Ez 10 v 14). This either means that the 'cherub' is synonymous with the Ox, or that Cherubim applies to the quality which the creature (the ox, eagle, lion, man) possesses. The seraphim ('burning ones') may be a similar example (Is 6 v 1). The term cherub may not be used in the first vision because God did not want to express this quality (perhaps 'grace'). Also the first vision deals with the land, the second with the city and temple in particular, and the name cherub is associated with sanctuary and Holy place.

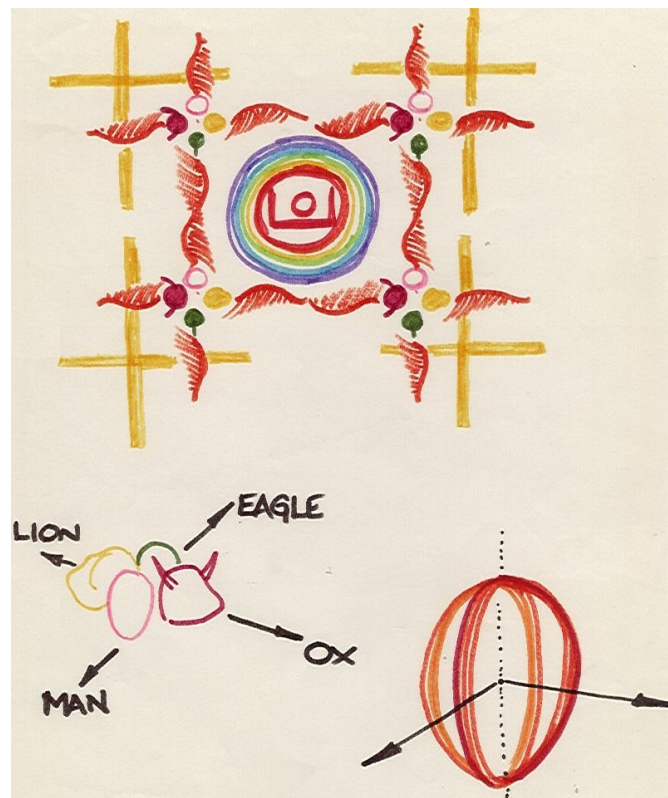


Figure 2. Schematic of the Cherubim as seen in Ezekiel.

However, let us move on to the description. The first aspect that confronts us is that they have **life**, they are "living" (strong) creatures. Secondly the overall likeness (likeness as in Gen 1 v 26) is of man. In the Hebrew, as we have said before there are many words for man. Here it is Adam. This may mean humanity at large with reference to its earthly origin (Heb. DaM= blood) or simply human in appearance, basically upright with legs and arms.

The feet (Ez 1 v 7) are peculiar in that they are not straight (i.e. no knee or that they are not crouching) and they terminate in the calves foot. The word calf is used of the golden calf of Exodus 32 (v 4) and the calf of the sin offering in Leviticus 9 (v 2). The feet are the feet of a ritually clean creature and they also have the appearance of "burnished brass" more properly copper, as in (Deut 8 v 9). The metal used in the outer court associated with the washing and offerings to God.

In verse 8 we see more details of the square symmetry of the creature i.e. 4 hands, 4 wings,

4 heads, the four faces are not on one head, but rather four heads on one body (see Ez 1 v 11). The "living" have as well as human appearance the appearance of fire (Ez 1 v 13). It may well have been God with the Cherubim who walked amidst the pieces of sacrifice in (Gen 15 v 17), since the creatures are associated with the covenant (i.e. the Ark of the Covenant).

They display the LIGHT and MOTION (Ez 1 v 14) for there are wheels connected with the appearance, and the wheels have the same spirit as the creatures (Ez 1 v 20).

At this point let us pause to consider whether the Cherubim are actually creations of God or aspects of His nature and purpose. In Revelation (ch 4 v 6) "the living" (Gk. ζῶν Zoe as in LXX version of Ezekiel) appear as single headed, six winged creatures (see Fig 3), independent of each other. It is this mutability (they appear in a different form) which leads me to see the creatures as symbolic, rather than actual existing creations like angels (the tabernacle symbolism also varies).

The wheels then, of which we were speaking, are not essential to the movement of the creature, since it has wings. I think that the connection of the wheel with the Earth (v 15) perhaps gives the clue. Wings for the power in the **air**, wheels for the power on the **Earth**. In verse 16 the wheels have a wheel within them and the consensus of commentators is that it was like two hoops at right angles (see Fig 2). The wheels (Ez 1 v 18), like the wings (cf 10 v 12), are full of eyes, and God's eyes, we know from scripture "are in every place", so I am inclined to view this as symbolic of the Divine omniscience (all seeing and knowing).

I am also inclined to the opinion that the vision here displays the power, attributes and purpose of God amongst His creation, symbolised in the four heads of the creatures. The wings too speak (Ez 1 v 24) with a voice like the Almighty.

As the wings drop (Ez 1 v 25) we have the revelation of the glory of God, which I suggest is **Jehovah Jesus**.

Now can we portray God both in the Cherubim and on the throne? I think so if we bear in mind that the infinite is being expounded by temporal analogy. We are, by earthly forms, being given aspects of the nature of God, (**Typology**, as in sacrifice, **Emblems** as oil, water, bread, wine, **Attributes** as in creation).

On the **throne** we have DOMINION and RULE, in the **wheels** and **wings** POWER and PURPOSE, in the **eyes** OMNISCIENCE, in the **totality** the SPIRIT which governs its motion (i.e. the Holy SPIRIT, the power in creation), in the **heads** the unity of CREATION under God, in the **fire** HOLINESS, in the **feet** the ideal PURITY.

God is made known to us by His works, and through His works we are to know Him (Job 31 v 26) by special revelation, but there is a danger in stopping at the creaturely manifestation as in Romans 1 (v 23).

I think that the position of the Cherubim in the vision of Ezekiel is to manifest the power and attributes of God in His creation, and to call this to the mind of the people who had so fallen short of the glory of God.

The very presence of God has a salutary effect on sinners particularly when coupled with a manifestation of power (for example, Luke 5 v 8: Peter and the miraculous draught of fishes, Acts 9 v 4: Paul on the Damascus road, Acts 16 v 29: the Phillipian Jailor). May God be gracious to grant such powerful conviction of sin in our own day and particularly where we live and among the people who we desire to be reconciled to God.

THE CHERUBIM PART 5.

THE CHERUBIM IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

Please read Revelation (chapter 4 vv 6 - 8) before continuing.

I want to conclude our study on the Cherubim by a look at the content of Revelation (or "Apocalypse" to transliterate the Greek). To set the stage, I want to briefly consider the book as a whole.

Disaster has become synonymous with apocalypse today and apocalyptic is used as an adjective to describe terrible events. We should note from the introduction of John's work (Rev 1 v 1) that for the **Saint** it is not a work of disaster, it is the REVELATION of JESUS CHRIST and this is the key to the whole book. Further, it is a book of blessing (Rev 1 v 3), to be **read, kept and heard**. This puts it beyond a merely local, historical scenario, it is for all ages. Now I agree that imagery is difficult, but I think that it will be clearer if we can structure the book. If we can define event horizons, we shall be able to start using the book. Like Ezekiel's work, we will notice in the prophetic/hieroglyph language, specific events.

Far from "doom and gloom", the Christian will gain confidence from the Apocalypse. In the midst of all of God's dealing, there are glimpses of the triumph of God's own children. Here is the book of encouragement and victory. Let us use it with confidence.

To move then to the specific section on the living creatures, which I suggest deals with the conflicts of Christ's kingdom, with evil in all its guises, we see a vision of Heaven. Here is the origin of COUNSEL and POWER. The throne room of God similar to the vision of Ezekiel compare (Rev 4 v 2 - 3 and Ezek 1 v 27). Where is God if He be not the Christ?

It all focuses on a double written scroll in (Rev 5 v 1) and it is a peculiar volume sealed with seven seals (the number of rest and completion), yet it cannot be opened by anybody (Rev 5 v 3). The condition is based upon the worthiness of the "little lamb" (Gk αρνιον, arnion = little lamb" Rev 5 v 9).

There are in the scrolls of Zechariah (chapter 5) and Ezekiel (chapter 3) God's reproofs. There we have a decree which in its power is released as the scrolls are unbuttoned, like sealed orders. Now I am going to suggest that the book or scroll is not simply about judgment as an end in itself, rather it is judgement towards a particular end. It is a decree summed up in the seventh trumpet of the seventh seal, the last trumpet (cf Rev 11 v 15: last trumpet, Rev 8 v 1: last seal). It is the unfolding of the kingly power of Christ triumphing in

the establishment of a kingdom, similar to (Ezra 6 v 1 ff).

Revelation chapter 4 then, casts a glance around the Royal Chamber and shows us imagery that we have already seen and some new pictures (see Fig 3). There are four and twenty elders in Revelation (ch 4 v 4), but are they symbolic or real people (i.e. like Paul, John, Peter)? I take them to be symbolic because in chapter 7, the Elders (the term presbyter is a NT ecclesiastical term), the "living ones", the angels and the redeemed are viewed separately. This would enhance the view that the "living ones" are **not** the redeemed or elect of God, neither are the Elders. The redeemed of Revelation (ch 7 v 9) are clothed in white robes, washed in the blood of Christ (Rev 7 v 14). This is the greeting symbol for the King (Ps 118 v 24 - 26 cf John 12 v 12 ff, perhaps was a type of the ultimate victory).



Figure 3. Schematic of the Cherubim in Revelation

The Elders are enthroned (Rev 4 v 4), they have "harps" and "vials" (Rev 5 v 8), the symbols of praise and prayer and I suggest that they are symbolic of a royal priesthood. In Chronicles (1 Chron 24) we see the priesthood divided into "courses" to let all minister. Zachariah in (Luke 1 v 5) was a member of the 8th "course" (1 Chron 24 v 11). In the **twenty four** courses (1 Chron 24 v 18) the perfect and complete service to God was administered throughout the year.

So I suggest that the Elders signify the perfect service of God, which is His due as Lord of Lords. The next circle nearer the throne reveals our friends "the living" (Fig 3). They now appear as individual representations of the creation (Rev 4 v 6). They have now 6 wings each (Rev 4 v 8) and they utter the words of the Seraphim (Is 6 v 1, Rev 4 v 8). The song is advanced though to reveal the covenant nature of God (Rev 4 v 8), the I AM (WAS, IS, WILL BE). Like the vision of Ezekiel the motion of the creatures is continuous and it is **throughout** and **about** the throne (Rev 4 v 6). This shows the ultimate relationship with the seat of God. If our exposition of Ezekiel is correct, the creatures of the mercy seat can be portrayed as

one with the throne (Ex 25), without contradiction with any other passage.

Now what do we make of the passage in Revelation chapter 5 (v 9), where the Authorised Version implies that both the Cherubim and Elders together sing that they are redeemed: "Thou hast redeemed us"? There is ancient MSS (manuscript) evidence for both readings, but "us" perhaps predominates. We might try to separate the Elders words from the Cherubim so that the song of redemption is only from their mouths. "Thou hast redeemed us" (i.e. the Elders) but Revelation chapter 7 (v 11) implies that the group falls down and says in unison these words. There can be little doubt that Elders and Cherubim sing together, just as in Revelation chapter 5 (v 11) all creation joins in the same ascription of worthiness of the Lamb.

I have suggested that the Elders are symbolic of the priest/kingship of believers and they can clearly sing of redemption. The living creatures can do so in as much as they reveal the redemptive work of God in creation. It does not imply that the sole content of revelation in the Cherubim is limited to portraying the redeemed creation, for Ezekiel shows us much more than that. So too does John, for in Revelation chapter 6 (v 1), the Cherubim summon the presence of the four horsemen (the elders are not involved in this execution of judgement).

The words "and see" are I suggest a textual addition. Why say it four times (Rev 6 vv 1, 3, 5 and 8) when John is there. Also in Revelation 17 (v 1 and 21 v 9) John is summoned by the words come (Gk. δεῦρο, desro as John 11 v 43 of Lazarus). "Come" (Gk. ἐρχου, erkou) is used to summon forth in Revelation 22 (v 17) Jesus, which is answered (Rev 22 v 20).

At this point it is worthwhile drawing your attention to Alford's ingenious exegesis. The four living are specifically involved in the opening of the first four seals, the Lamb alone deals with the others unaided. Now to whom is "Come" (ἐρχου Present imperative) addressed? To John, the horsemen or the Lamb? Alford says Christ. This would indeed harmonise well with the statement of (Rom 8 v 20 ff). The creatures which exhibit in part God's creation are seen with their hope not simply fixed on judgment, but in Christ. This is far nearer the truth of the book of the Revelation of Christ. There is little to be welcomed in the four horsemen (cf Ezek 14 v 21), but there is certainly much to be welcomed in the outcome of the visitation by the triumph of Christ. This is the point of Revelation, in that its long sighted goal is the victory of the Kingdom of God.

Now let us summarise and conclude from our study:

SUMMARY

1. The creatures are living (i.e. characterising LIFE).
2. They show 4 divisions of creation.
3. They have an intimate relationship to the throne of God.
4. They accompany Christ.
5. They display worship.
6. They show the attributes of omniscience (eyes), and omnipotence (wheels and wings).
7. They bear the throne (rule).
8. They function under the SPIRIT.
9. They exhibit holiness and maintain holiness (cf Gen 3 v 24).
10. They guard the holiness of God in the tabernacle.

CONCLUSION

I am suggesting that the living (creatures) or Cherubim manifest the Divine power and omniscience of God in creation and redemption, a symbolic picture of God at work in His creation, governing, judging, purifying and encouraging. God, seeing throughout His works (i.e. knowing) and God maintaining (the unity of His upholding Spirit). His attributes also praise Him, as all His works praise and manifest His Holy name.

How does this compare with the list (at the end of this appendix)?

I think that we can see that there are elements of truth in all of the statements. They seem to me to be a little too sharp in their focus and omit many other features of this strange "creature". We ourselves may not have gone far enough, so this study should be regarded as basic and preparatory to future studies.

Going back to Exodus 25 (v 20), the creatures spread their wings over the mercy seat as the Cherubim of glory (Heb 9 v 5). Their wings I have suggested in an attitude of protection and faces towards the mercy seat. Thus in that pure gold (solid gold) which we have seen is Christ (Rom 3 v 25) are reflected the faces, bodies and wings of the Cherubim. There is by our interpretation of the Cherubim the thought of Christ reflecting all that is Divine, not simply the holiness, but the power and the glory. The creation reflects the Creator (Rom 1 v 18), so too the creative works and power is reflected in the Creator Jesus, it oscillates or resonates together. And let us not forget that the mercy seat reflected also the shekinah glory where God descends (John 1 v 14). Thus we are taught that there are in Christ Jesus many facets of glory so numerous as to be over whelming, yet not capable of being missed, Praise God.

APPRAISAL OF THE CHERUBIM FROM DIFFERENT AUTHORS

ANGELS

- A.J.Pollock (Typical Teaching) Angelic creatures, Gods messengers of judgement.
- A.W.Pink (p 204 Gleanings in Exodus) Hierarchies in the unfolding of Gods redemptive purpose.
- M.Henry (Commentary) Ministering spirits
- J.Calvin (Genesis) Angels.
- Kiel and Delitzsch (Commentary) Spirits of heaven.
- Rawlinson (in Ellicotts' Commentary) select class of angels.
- Benson (Commentary) Emblems of angelic nature.
- T.Scott (Commentary on Exodus) Emblematical representations of angels.
- H.C.Lingold (Genesis) Type of being somewhat like angels.
- J.Owen (Works vol 1 p 310) Ministry of angels within the church.
- R.L.Dabney (Lectures in Systematic Theology) Angels.
- B.Keach (Preaching from Types) Metaphorical angels.

REDEEMED HUMANITY

- A.Habersham (Types p 63) Redeemed man.
- P.Fairbairn (Typology p 230) symbolic representatives of the real possessors i.e. the church.
- Ramsey (Revelation) Human nature redeemed.
- H.Hoeksema (Behold He Cometh) fullness and power and glory in the new world.
- G.Bush (Commentary) Mystic embodiment of the congregation. Holy man/not angels.

CREATION

- E.W.Hengstenberg (Kingdom of God in the OT p 346 vol 1) Worldly creation.
- R.J.Rushdoony (Thy Kingdom Come) Creation beyond "chaos".

GOVERNMENT

- A.Barnes (Revelation) Divine Government.
- Alford (Revelation) Purity, calmness and majesty of Gods rule.
- J.H.Brown (The Sanctuary) Preservers of the holiness of Gods throne.
- W.Soltau (Holy Vessels p 24) Executors of Gods will.

PURPOSE

- P.Maris (Revelation) with the Elders, the purposes of God in creation.

SPIRIT

- Newbury (Types of the Tabernacle p 40) Fullness of the spirit received by the ascended Christ.

GUARDIANS

- W.Slemming (According to Pattern p 129) Symbols of guardianship. (ie. Christ).

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

(Extract from "Contours of a Christian Philosophy" by L. Kalsbeek, chapter 1. Wedge Publishing Foundation. 1975. ISBN 0-88906-000-2). This is an introduction to the "Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea", contained in the four volume work **"A New Critique of Theoretical Thought"** by Herman Dooyeweerd (pictured).



What is philosophy?

What is philosophy? K.J. Popma, one of the representatives of the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea, has given the following answer to this question. "To philosophize is to discern the structure of creation and to describe systematically, i.e. in logical order, what is subject to that structure".

When Popma speaks of the structure of creation and what is subject to it, he is referring to the whole of temporal reality. We cannot philosophize about what transcends this temporality, but within it there is nothing too lofty or too common for philosophical reflection.

In ordinary, everyday life we are concerned with people and their activities, with all sorts of complex events, and with societal relationships such as the state, the church, the labour union and the family. Temporal reality also includes animals, plants, minerals, and other things, whether they are formed by nature or by culture, as, for example, by men on assembly lines, in shops, or in laboratories.

Even such a sketchy account has involved us not in making but in observing all sorts of salient distinctions in human life. This may seem a truism, but the history of philosophy offers many examples of men who have superimposed brilliant systems on reality before they began examining it. Dooyeweerd wishes to guard against this danger and to investigate accurately the structure which temporal reality itself reveals.

Let us begin by examining an ordinary event as reported in a newspaper.

An arsonist set two farms on fire. Only a few of the cattle in the barn could be saved. The extinguishing of the fire was hampered by two difficulties: the outlying farmsteads were not connected to the water system and the canals and ditches were covered by a thick layer of ice. The homeless families were taken in by their neighbours. The damage is covered by insurance.

Even in the few lines which the newspaper devoted to the story, various facets of the event appear; some are obvious, but others require a more observant eye. The fire marshal's arrival on the scene tells the onlookers that officials suspect arson; their immediate indignation suggests the moral facet of this event. The kindness of the neighbours in

providing shelter, clothing, and comfort for the victims also points to a moral side. There is a juridical aspect as well: under our laws the arsonist must be prosecuted; moreover, the payment of fire insurance and the efforts of relief agencies are subject to strict regulations.

Despite the human misery, there is a certain aesthetic side or aspect to the sight of the flames blazing up high against the dark evening sky. The fireman's and the neighbours' fighting the fire together suggests the social side of the event. The losses may be covered by insurance or absorbed by the farmer and his family; in the case, the economic aspect becomes evident when the sun comes up on the blackened remnants of the family home.

The conversation of the onlookers and the gestures of the firemen on the ladders suggest a lingual aspect. The farmer himself becomes more aware of this aspect when he attempts to settle his insurance claim and must make sense out of the legal jargon of his policy statement. Likewise, the journalist's shorthand notes, his taped interviews, and his final copy for the newspaper involve linguistic symbols to describe real, human events.

When we realise that there is no running water on the farm, that the firemen must make do with a primitive village fire engine, and that the farm house was built at the turn of the century, we sense the historical aspect of the whole situation. The threat of the fire's spreading to nearby fields and tool sheds points to the spatial aspect of the event.

As the newspaper account points out, two farms were involved in the fire: this in turn affects a certain number of people, both those living in the farm homes and the men making up the fire crew. The morning after, the count of the dead animals and the calculations of damages further highlight the numerical or arithmetic aspect.

The ice which hinders the hosemen in their work, the billowing smoke, and the hiss of the water as it strikes the flames point to a physical aspect. The ivy covering the walls of the farmhouse was characterised by the organic phenomena of life - the biotic aspect - until it was killed by the intense heat of the fire. Its death, however, is totally devoid of emotion or grief, whereas the cows low in pain and panic at the threat to their lives, indicating a sensitive aspect to their experience.

Because they cannot make analytic distinctions, it does not occur to the trapped animals to loosen the ropes which bind them. The farm and the firemen who try to save the houses and their contents are able to do their work only because they do possess this capacity. Their carefully planned efforts and the fact that the authorities can sit down the next morning to reconstruct the entire event show us that the fire also has an analytic aspect.

Although we have talked about these aspects in a rather haphazard fashion, Dooyeweerd arranges them in a specific order for reasons which will become clear later. The arithmetic aspect comes first in the list, and the faith aspect (also called the pistic aspect, from the Greek word for faith) completes it. Can we say, then, that there is a faith aspect in such an ordinary event as a fire? Certainly. Perhaps one farmer who has suffered this blow is a Christian. Precisely because he is a farmer, dependent upon uncertainties of weather, fluctuating markets, and the like, he has learned to experience the comfort of Christ's words that not a hair will fall from our head without the will of our heavenly Father. Perhaps

another man sees the event as the result of chance or bad luck. Furthermore, each man at the scene whether victim, neighbour, or fireman, discovers some kind of meaning - or its absence - in the event. One observer may see total meaninglessness in this human calamity, but even in that case he expresses a kind of faith, though it is not the traditional faith of western man.

At first glance, this whole analysis may well appear a bit forced. However, let us peruse what is meant by these distinctions. To begin with, are they considered to be exhaustive? Dooyeweerd constantly emphasises that his analysis is open to correction and elaboration. With respect to the matter in hand, and for good reasons, he rejects the traditional coordination of space and time. In his view, there is a spatial aspect but no temporal aspect. This important matter will be discussed more fully in chapter 20. In his later development Dooyeweerd himself pointed to the existence of an additional aspect: the kinematic. This dimension of reality is characterised by movement and must be distinguished from the physical aspect. Not all members of the school associated with Dooyeweerd agree on this distinction. Clearly, the point is that these fundamental, analytic distinctions must reflect the real differences of given reality; the system cannot be closed.

There is also the possibility that we ought to make fewer basic distinctions. Then we would have to show that one of the aspects is identical with another, therefore only its variant, and thus reducible to the other. For instance, some contemporary thinkers assert that the faith aspect can be reduced to the sensitive - or psychic - aspect.

According to Dooyeweerd these aspects can be observed in everything that exists in temporal reality. Let us test the assertion by looking at a tulip, proceeding this time from the bottom of the scale of aspects to the top.

I hold a single tulip in my hand and immediately discover its arithmetic aspect without even having to count; but should I wish to examine the flower more closely, I can discover a certain number of leaves on the stem, of petals on the flower, or of stamens within it. If I try to plant the flower in a pot, I realise that it takes up a very specific amount of space (spatial aspect). The molecular movement present in the plant points to the kinematic aspect.

My basic knowledge of botany tells me that the plant feeds and breathes, pointing to what Dooyeweerd calls physically and chemically qualified phenomena. The slow death of the flower in the garden or its rapid death in my living room displays the organic phenomena of life. I can see the flower and touch it, which is only possible because of its sensitive aspect. Again, the tulip is subject to human analysis. Hence, the tulip functions in the analytic or logical aspect.

If I am interested enough to do a little research, I can discover the historical aspect in the lengthy cultivation of this beautiful garden plant from its ancestor, the wild tulip. Furthermore, the plant does not just exist; I can talk about it with names which recreate my experience with it for people who have never seen it. It has lingual aspects. It also has a social aspect because it helps transform drab areas into beautiful parks which draw human beings together for a Sunday afternoon picnic or a political rally. Although the bulb grower is more conscious of the flower's economic aspect than most, I too realise its value when I

spend part of my week's wages on my garden. When the grower quotes me different prices for different kinds of plants, I run up against the flower's aesthetic aspect: the more beautiful the colour and form, the higher the value.

Once I own the flower, the juridical aspect become very important because only I can decide its fate, and I can call for legal protection against people who would steal or damage my plant. The love and care devoted to cultivating a fine plant suggest the moral aspect. Although the dirt under my nails and the pulled muscle in my back provide proof that a great deal of human intervention has gone into the plant's growth, I see this growth as the creation of God. My neighbour, however, considers it a refined product of an evolutionary process. As different as our convictions are, we both ground them in a particular faith.

As with the fire, the tulip has revealed all of the aspects quite readily. But a very serious question arises. Is it really possible to lump all these aspects together? Clearly a plant has a biotic aspect, but no one will assert that a plant loves or believes. However, we know that it is the object of love and faith. We might ask, then, whether some of the aspects at the upper end of the scale do not have more to do with man himself, who does the loving and the believing.

Dooyeweerd holds that the aspects of a tulip, or any other part of creation, are intimately connected with the aspects of man himself. To use a technical term, a tulip displays an individuality structure, which men experience as a structural whole. A brief explanation is in order here. An individuality structure, also that of a tulip, cannot possibly exist detached from and independent of the structure of human existence. These structures are related to each other; for how else would we have knowledge of the aspects of these individuality structures, if it were not through our own way of experiencing? For this reason Dooyeweerd speaks of the aspects of human experience, which correspond with the aspects of concrete entities. This complex matter will be treated more explicitly later.

Let us turn again to a specific example of a concrete human activity; the launching of a manned space vehicle. The aspects of this event can readily be distinguished. No wonder. The planners had to keep them clearly in mind to avoid a disaster.

Aspect	Typical activity
1 arithmetic	Calculations of all kinds from the number of food packages to the precise number of minutes until splashdown.
2 spatial	The amount of space required for the crew, their instruments, equipment, and waste materials.
3 kinematic	The predictable movements caused by the moon's gravitational pull; the kinds of movements expected at each stage of a normal life-off.
4 physical	The peculiar properties of the fuels which

	make them ignite.
5 biotic	The precise tests on the crew's breathing, circulation, digestion, etc.
6 sensitive	Tests to determine how the men will react emotionally to weightlessness or cramped quarters.
7 analytic	The detailed planning of every distinct part of the project long before it was put on paper.
8 historical	The development of a culture capable of such a project; a stage of technique capable of accomplishing it.
9 lingual	Development of new sets of symbols to describe new activities.
10 social	The social cohesion developed among the crew members; their relationship with the men on the ground.
11 economic	Careful budgeting to finance each item.
12 aesthetic	The beauty of the lift-off which inspires all sorts of new works of art.
13 juridical	The question of "free space"; negotiations to determine whose laws and courts will control the activities carried on in space.
14 ethical	The efforts to justify spending enormous sums of money on space flights in the face of widespread starvation over much of the earth.
15 pistic	Man's opinion of himself and his work revealed in the vision of space travel: wanton arrogance (the Greek hubris)? the pioneering spirit? the urge to control the universe through the sovereign power of technology? an effort to obey the cultural mandate? Both the questions and the answers given relate to the faith aspect of the whole project.

From the examples of the fire, the tulip, and the space project, it should be clear that in Dooyeweerd's view everything which is concrete in temporal reality displays these aspects. We must, however, be careful to avoid one common misunderstanding. As Dooyeweerd has warned many times, we must not identify individuality structures with aspects. An individuality structure is a concrete, whole entity or event which has special qualities distinguishing it from all other individuality structures. For example, even a small child expects a tree to respond one way to this investigations and a cat to respond another way. As individuality structures they are clearly distinct, yet they both participate in one way or another in the same aspects. Individuality structures and aspects are not synonymous terms. Thus in this discussion we have refrained quite consciously from saying that the physicochemical phenomena in the tulip are the physical aspect. The phenomena of life in the plant are not the biotic aspect itself; they are characterised by this aspect. The distinction is fundamental to any understanding of Dooyeweerd's analysis of reality.

In concrete things, events, actions, processes - individuality structures - it is always a question of what; in the aspects it is always a question of how. The aspects concerns a manner of being, a mode; therefore, they are also called modal aspects or modalities. Suppose I enter a museum. What do I see (experience) there? A painting. How do I like (experience) it? I find it unbelievably beautiful (the aesthetic aspect of the object). I leave the museum and walk down the street to my car. What is happening (what do I experience) there? Boys are making fun of an old woman. How do I judge their actions (experience them)? I consider them reprehensible (the moral aspect of the act). In ordinary, pretheoretical experience, without much thought, I realise that the manner of being (mode) of a stone, which is qualified by the physical aspect, is different from the modes of plants and animals, which are qualified by the biotic and sensitive aspects respectively.

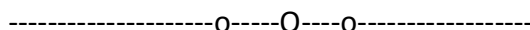
At this point another important matter should be introduced. Particular laws or norms hold for each of the aspects. The laws for the physical aspect are different from the laws for the logical, which in turn are different from those for the moral, and so on. A sphere of modal laws, which is enclosed by a modal aspect, has been called a law-sphere, but because of the misunderstanding surrounding this term, Dooyeweerd prefers to discard it.

With the discussion of the modal aspects we have come a step further in our investigation of the structure of temporal reality. The study of the structure of the aspects and their coherence (the modal structure) must form the basis for a closer study of the individuality structure of concrete things, events, and societal relationships. An amazing diversity of individuality structures functions in each aspect. Any kind of theoretical analysis of an individuality structure must begin with the structure of all the modal aspects before the investigator can understand the unified structure of the concrete entity as a whole.

Is it possible for such philosophical investigation to remain completely neutral so that all investigators will come to the same conclusions as long as they possess enough intelligence, observe reality with sufficient accuracy, and obey the rules for logical thinking? From what has been said so far in this chapter, it should be clear that Dooyeweerd and his associates would say that it is impossible to be neutral. All philosophical activity is itself concrete, functioning in all aspects of temporal reality. The philosopher cannot actually lift himself or his activities out of temporal reality which displays all of the aspects, including the faith

aspect. When K. J. Popma answered the question "What is philosophy?", he, like other philosophers, formulated his answer on the basis of a certain belief about reality.

The issue of neutrality in philosophical investigation is so fundamental that we must clarify it before we can pursue the explication of Dooyeweerd's structural analysis. Actually, since philosophical thought belongs to temporal reality, it would be better to say that in a systematic description of the structure of temporal reality, the first task must be analysing philosophical thinking itself.



Author's conclusion to this commentary.

There is a fundamental assumption that our thinking is unaffected by any flaws in our nature. Yet the Bible tells us, *1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* Until a man comes to Christ and receives forgiveness of his sin and a new birth, he will be stuck in a dark world of foolish wisdom. Just so, God views the thinking of the natural man as foolish, *1Co 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.*

The natural man will not accept the scripture, the word of God, because he is at enmity with his Creator. All that we speak of here will be regarded as the ramblings of the fool by the unbeliever. But then, the Bible was never given to the unbeliever, it was God's word to His people and it always will be.

THE MILLENNIUM AND MILLENIAL VIEWS

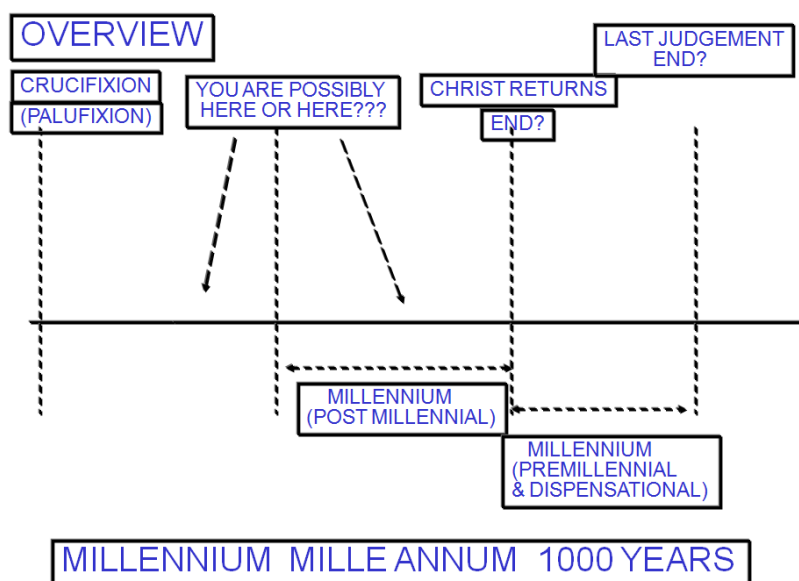


Figure 4. General overview

The subject I now wish to approach comes under the heading "The Millennium" or "Mille Anni" of (Rev 20 v 3). This is the Latin form of the Greek and means 1000 years. The Greek uses 'CHILIA', and certain early Christians who had particular views about this subject were called Chiliasts. It is a sensitive subject among Christians and there are different schools of interpretation as you will see. These differences occur, I believe, from the starting points of interpretation, and where particular aspects of doctrine are emphasised.

One such point is whether we take the scriptures literally in (Rev 20) or whether we take them spiritually. Another is whether we believe the reign (Rev 20 v 4) to be on earth or in heaven or both. Yet another is whether it takes place after the general resurrection or before? By general resurrection I mean the resurrection of all men on the day of judgement. These things D.V. we shall examine in the course of our study. For today I want to present an overview of the various opinions and interpretations. In subsequent studies I will look at these views in more details before presenting my own statement of interpretation.

The four major schools of thought are called pre-, post-, a-millennialism and dispensationalism. More fully stated they mean the pre-, post-, a- millennial second coming of Christ, and I will briefly illustrate these by a diagram (Fig. 4) on which I have placed some historical reference points. The reference points are the Crucifixion and second coming of Christ. Relative to these points the premillennialist says that the Millennium happens after the coming of Christ and so pre- is used to describe the position of the advent rather than the Millennium. By the same token post- describes the coming of Christ as occurring after the Millennium. A-millennialists (i.e. the **a-** is privative) hold that there is no Millennium in the sense of a thousand literal years. Dispensationalism is an extreme form of premillennialism held by many of the Brethren and lately Pentecostal assemblies, who have particular views about a restored natural Israel.

Now you may be puzzling as to why I should go into certain doctrinal views that I hold to be erroneous? I do so to enable you to see the thought process of the adherents to these systems. This will enable you to argue constructively against a false position and it will enlarge your own view about the scope of prophetic interpretation. We shall see where and why Christendom ceases to be united.

There are among many of these groups of thought, common concepts of the Christian faith. For example, the same general concept of Christ as a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice as the only ground of salvation, in addition to the belief in a future visible second coming of Christ, a resurrection body, a universal judgement, rewards for the righteous and punishment for the wicked in hell. Well you may say, if they all hold that, is this study really necessary? I say yes, because we shall be looking at distinctive methods of interpretation employed by the various groups as they relate to the time and purpose of Christ's coming and the nature of the kingdom set up by His coming.

These doctrinal positions in turn affect other attitudes in life. Some pre-millennialists and dispensationalists are very active supporters of earthly Israel and Jewish evangelism. Others who hold that the Church is in decline towards the coming, emphasise a 'holding action' by work in missions and hospitals rather than colleges. A classic example of prophetic motivation was US President Jimmy Carter's peace initiative between Menahim Begin (Israel) and Anwar Sadat (Egypt) in the late 1970's. You will unquestionably outwork your prophetic viewpoint. The same thing happened with UK Prime Minister Lloyd George who supported an Israeli homeland.

It is often disconcerting to the Christian to have presented so many differing views about a Biblical event. It often leads to a lack of confidence in scriptural inspiration, since there is no clear agreeable interpretation. Surely the Bible is confusing? I think not. I believe that the differences in interpretation reflect even among theologians the frailty of the human condition rather than God's word (2 Peter 3 v 15).

It may also reflect that the Spirit of God has not yet fully revealed His purpose in these words (2 Peter 1 v 10-12). However, we know that we are on scriptural ground, but ground we must tread carefully upon. With this in mind we shall not make any new doctrine from (Rev 20) rather we shall endeavour to see (as we did elsewhere) in Revelation an interpretation consistent with what has been revealed elsewhere. By elsewhere I mean from Genesis through the Gospels to the letters of John and Jude!

The problem with the Millennium is that it is only spoken of here in (Revelation 20) the next step is where do we "ram it" into other passages of scripture? Where would we put it in (1 Thess 4 v 13 - 18)? Where in (1Cor 15 v 50 - 57)? Where in (Matt 24 v 33)? Where in (Daniel 9 v 24 - 27)? Where in (Isaiah 66 v 22 - 24)?

I trust that the Lord will lead us cautiously into a fuller understanding of this subject and that you might do some advance study on your own over the coming weeks. After all you must be fully persuaded in your own mind and not just blindly accept what I tell you.

It was no justification of Adams erroneous position (Genesis 3 v 12) to say well "I just believed what I was told". He harkened to error and was blamed (Gen 3 v 17). Eve's views were not God's views. It's your duty to find the mind of the Lord in this matter in which I merely show you my own studied view. Disagree with me by all means, but do so from scripture.

PREMILLENNIALISM

This view holds that the Lord will return before the Millennium. There is no agreed doctrinal formulation to this view and we shall be looking at generally commonly agreed points. The elements of the system which we shall see elsewhere are:

- 1) The Second Coming
- 2) The Tribulation
- 3) Armageddon
- 4) The Kingdom
- 5) The Millennium
- 6) Final Judgement and the order in which we place them.

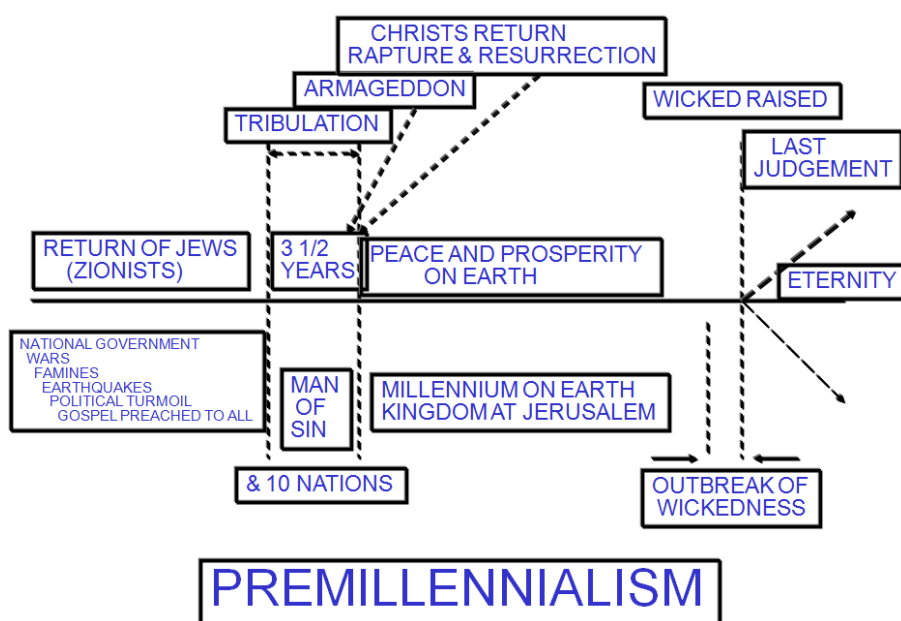


Figure 5. Premillennial overview

Outline of premillennialism. Rapture is **not** a Biblical word but it expresses the idea of (1 Thess 4 v 13-17). The Latin raptor is a snatcher or seizer, hence rapture the act of seizing by force or hurrying along rapidly. If we do not quibble with the word we can accept that there will be a rapture. In this system it is placed at the end of the current world order and before the Millennium. At the same time believers are translated to glory (Col 3 v 4, 1 Cor 15 v 51-53), not secretly but openly.

Before this rapture occurs at the end of the age there is to be a period of tribulation, thorough which the church is to go. The support for this taken from (Matt 24 v 21, Dan 12 v

1) and is not connected with the fall of Jerusalem (AD70) but the end of the age.

The tribulation is associated with the period of time when the man of sin, the personal Antichrist holds a reign of terror. He is associated with the revived Roman Empire, 10 nations of central and Southern Europe⁶ (Dan 7 v 7 v 20), although he may be a ruler at that time. He makes a covenant with the unbelieving Jews in Palestine and breaks it after 3.5 years. The ensuing persecution of the Jews who are shut up in Jerusalem ends with the return of Christ at the battle of Armageddon.

Historic Pre-Millennialism sees a number of events happening at the time of the second coming. Wars, Famine, Earthquakes, political turmoil, national unrest, preaching of the gospel to all nations, the return of the Jews to Palestine and the setting up of a national government of Palestine. World events are focused by this system in upon the Middle East.

At the culmination of the events of the Tribulation, Rapture and Armageddon there occurs a general resurrection of the Saints, the first resurrection. This is to include the Saints of the O.T. and N.T. These reign with Christ during the Millennium and at the end of this period a resurrection of the wicked of all ages occurs for judgement and condemnation. It supports this from (Rev 20 v 4-6) (1 Cor 15 v 22-26) (1 Thess 4 v 13-17).

The Kingdom of God is set up on earth during the period of the Millennium, hence the glory and the accomplishments of it belongs to this future age. The Kingdom, then is not in the world at this present time, but absent even in the form of the Church. This low view of the Church puts forward the presumptions that the Church is a temporary and interim agency. In doing this, it places the Christian hope in an Earthly Kingdom (future) fostered principally from Old Testament prophecies taken literally, giving hope to the Jews. This however, is not the way the N.T. looks at the interpretation of the O.T. in my opinion.

The age of the Kingdom, or Millennial reign is therefore determined as a great age of peace (Is 2 v 4). It is a time of prosperity (Is 60 v 17). It is a period of long life (Is 65 v 20). The created order will be changed (Is 65 v 25, Is 11 v 8-9). Christ will reign as king over the earth directing the affairs of men. At the end of the Millennium a further outbreak of wickedness occurs which ends in the final judgement and resurrection of the wicked.

This has not been an exhaustive study on pre-millennium but it sets forth the major tenets of the belief which you will encounter among many Christians.

In order to point you towards a personal analysis of the system, I am going to leave you with some questions to ponder. They are primarily based upon (Rev 20) while reading principally O.T. scriptures into its interpretation and structure.

1. Is the literalism applied to the view, particularly from the O.T. justified?
2. What is the N.T. concept of the Kingdom of God?
 - i. Is the idea of a postponed kingdom (i.e. To the Millennium) justified?

⁶ At the original time of writing, the EU 10 member states were considered to be part of this but the EU outgrew this guess.

3. Can we justify the idea of time separation between
 - i. The coming of Christ, the resurrection,
 - ii. The last judgement and the end of the world?
 - iii. Or are these events synchronised?
4. Can we connect the events of the second coming with the institution of an earthly Kingdom with its capital in an earthly Jerusalem?
5. Can the risen Saints share the new world with people living in their earthly, sinful state?
 - i. What is the N.T. position concerning the first Resurrection, the second resurrection and the First death?

In view of the symbolism in the book of Revelation we are to be very cautious in presenting an interpretation of the last days using this book as the only key to the subject. You may find it interesting to do a study of the last days primarily neglecting Revelation and see what view the rest of scripture presents.

DISPENSATIONALISM

In order to understand the nature of error we have to understand the historical background that nurtured it. People who despise church history and biblical history are often the first to repeat error (1 Cor 10 v 11, Rom 15 v 4, Heb 4). It should form a part of your devotional reading and I trust that you will become familiar with some of the characters that I will show you today. They have their great points and their weaknesses, their passion and pride, their convictions and their error, so let us learn from them.

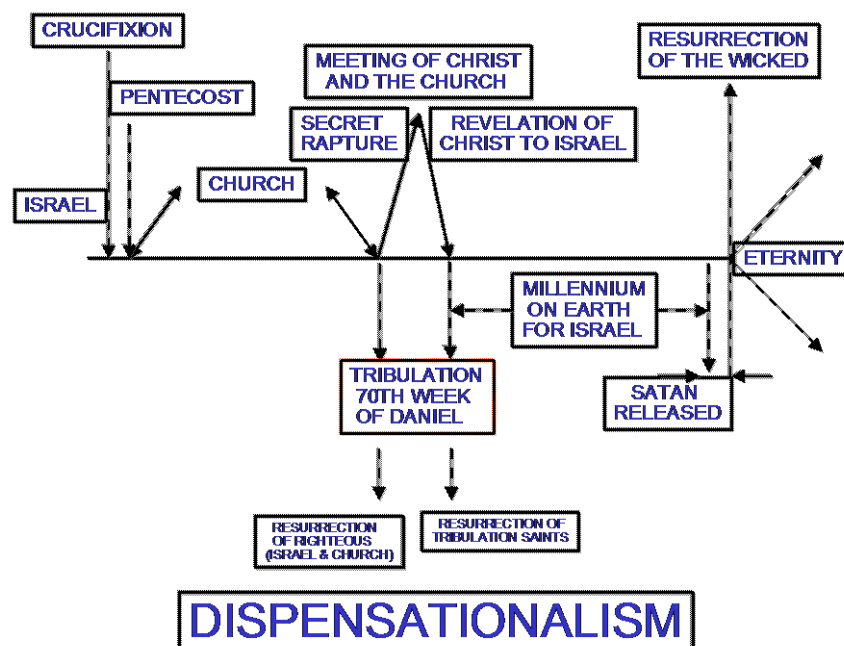


Figure 6. Dispensationalism overview

Dispensationalism owes a lot to a man called Emmanuel Lacunza a South American Roman Catholic priest who according to Andrew Miller (Brethren Historian) published a book in 1812 in Spain called "The coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty". This book reached England in 1827 and was adopted by Edward Irving, the eloquent but not always accurate

revivalist preacher. In turn it was used at prophetic conferences and became a fundamental source of ideas for the Christian churches.

Lacunza identified the antichrist with a body of people rather than an individual. This body, the apostate clergy of the church of Rome would form an important role in the events leading up to the Millennium. According to Lacunza the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews led to the transfer of the centre of union of God's people on earth from Jerusalem to Rome, with the Jews temporarily cast off by God (see Rom 11). With the defection of this clergy of Rome, 'the antichrist', the way would be open for the Jews to become the active part of the church and the centre to revert back to Jerusalem.

Now why was this idea a core doctrine of Dispensationalism (and pre-millennialism) so readily accepted? It was put out by a Roman Catholic, a Jesuit (the S.S. of the RC's) and these were the historical enemies of Protestantism. I will speculate.

There was little doubt in the minds of the puritan reformers that the Pope was an antichrist. Puritan John Trapp (1601-1669) in his commentary on (2 Thess 2) makes this abundantly clear. Speaking on the "falling away" (v 3) he saw it as the falling away from the Roman Empire, going on to say "so this "man of Sin" (is) that Antichrist of Rome". Trapp further speculates, that Solomon's temple was finished in the year of the world 3000 and destroyed together with the city in the year of the world exactly 4000, therefore the spiritual temple shall be constituted in 3000 or perhaps 4000 years more!

This view of the antichrist permeated the Christian world and there is no doubt that the Roman Catholic church made efforts to cast off the slur. A man called Alcazar (1554-1613) and Ribera (1537-1591) both Spanish Jesuits argued for a future Antichrist who would be a person not an institution like the papacy. This person they said would rebuild the temple of Jerusalem proscribe the Christian religion, be acknowledged by the Jews, claim to be God and conquer the world all in the space of a literal 3.5 years, This overthrow of the church of Rome would be apostasy - from the pope!!

I think that Lacunza, like these Jesuits was trying to take the heat off of the Pope. This teaching was thus welcome propaganda for the papacy. It is further of note that Lacunza circulated his manuscript under the pseudonym of "Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra", a Hebrew Christian and converted Jew. Why use this deceit other than to gain general acceptance among the other churches of Christendom.

Here in this book, then, was fuel for the fire. At the time it came to prominence in the early 1800's, a revival of Biblical teaching was taking place with a particular emphasis on the second coming. Many men were born at this time that came to prominence in a group that came to be known as the Plymouth Brethren. In some large measure we owe them all a debt of gratitude for their labours. George Muller the founder of the Bristol Orphanages, G. V. (Vicesimus the 20th child) Wigram (b. 1805) whose money and labour have given us the Englishmans Greek and Hebrew Concordances, B. W. Newton (b.1807) descendent of the quaker George Fox, C. H. Mackintosh (b.1820) Expositor, William Kelly (b.1820), Henry W., Soltau (b.1805) Old Testament Expositor on the Tabernacle, Thomas Newberry (b.1811) who left us a Bible with excellent notes and J. G. Bellett (b.1795) expositor on the person and

work of Christ. You will find excellent details on these men in Pickering's volume "Chief men among the Brethren". Of course there were many more and not least and perhaps the greatest J. N. Darby the much maligned power house of the movement. We use his translation of the Bible in our own studies. (It is a very good translation and not a commentary, so it does not propagate his doctrinal error).

This group of men gathered together in the providence of God to form one of the most powerful and gifted teaching ministries of the early/mid 1800's with their publication centre at Plymouth, hence the name - Plymouth Brethren.

We cannot properly begin our explanation of the teachings of Dispensationalism without a brief sketch of the life of J. N. Darby. Incidentally, one of the trademarks of brethren books, when you see them in the shops is that they used their initials and not their full names (i.e. JND), perhaps as a mark of Christian modesty. John Nelson Darby was born in 1800, the nephew of Admiral Darby of the HMS Bellerophon and was a godson of Admiral Nelson, soon to die at Cape Trafalgar. He was born in the same year as E. B. Pusey the champion of Anglo Catholicism, and died, both in the same year of 1882. He was an educated man (Westminster School and Trinity College Dublin) graduating in 1819 as a classical medallist, and commenced work as a lawyer at the Irish Chancery Bar. There is evidence that he was passing through a spiritual crisis, and consequently sought ordination in the Anglican Church, becoming first a deacon in 1825 and 'priest' in 1826. His father promptly disinherited him. As a priest he was untiring among the poor but following a fall from his horse which laid him up for over 3 months he came to some deeper studies and conclusions about the word of God. At this time he began to break away from the high church ideas of his contemporaries Newman and Pusey.

Darby made the link with Irvingites at the 'Albury Conference' through the Viscountess Powercourt who had attended it. It was also the introduction to other men who would become chief among the Brethren. (Groves, Bellett, Congleton, Cronin) who met in Dublin. At their own meeting to break bread, Darby broke from the C of E. completely. He then went to Plymouth, Devon, at the invitation of B.W. Newton and by 1832 a gathering of believers was formed there. An account of one of these meetings is given in Millers Volume "the brethren" (pp 42-45). These "Fellowship meetings", as they were called do not differ radically from our own and I am sure that we would have found them a blessing. As this group expanded others were gathered (S.P. Tregelles (of Lexicon fame) the brother-in-law of B.N. Newton; R. C. Chapman at Barnstaple, William Craik and George Muller at Bristol). There can be little doubt from the lists of names in this early ministry that the teaching ministry must have been overwhelmingly powerful.

Darby went to the continent to evangelise in 1837, and by 1840 had formed several French speaking congregations in Switzerland. Back in Plymouth by 1845 he found a departure from some of the early teachings they held in common (some on prophecy). He withdrew and formed a new company of believers (see chart of the successive splits in 'brief history of the Brethren').

This was the start of a disintegration and reformation of the churches and the start of the exclusive brethren. Bitterness abounded and many friendships were severed permanently.

It was not all Darby's fault. There were many strong characters - men clearly used of God, who exercised much grace with their gifts but found no difficulty in putting their clay and iron boots into each other's backside. (See Fig. 7 below of Schisms in 'brief history of the Brethren').

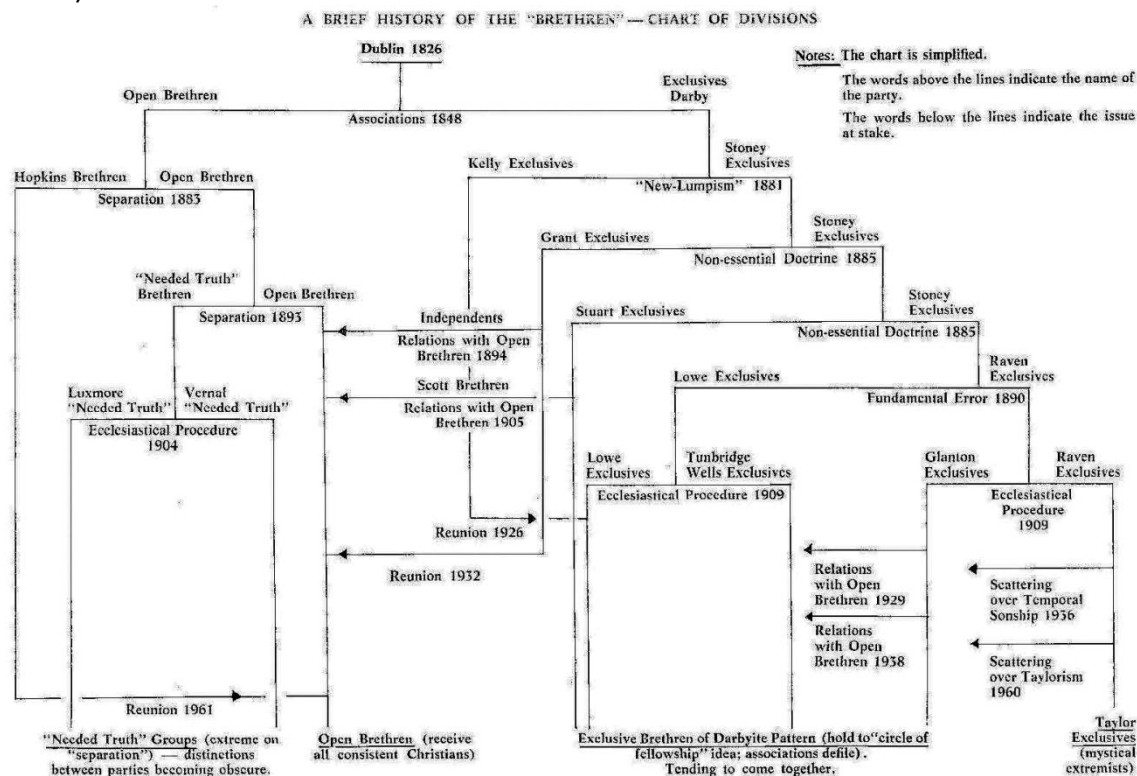


Figure 7. Brethren schisms

Darby despite the personal attacks that many make against him was a tireless worker for the Lord. He translated the scripture into French and to German for his congregations there, (from the original Hebrew and Greek). The English version we use came later. He wrote studies for magazines, Synopsis of the Bible, notes and letter and Hymns.

"This World is a wilderness wide!
I have nothing to seek or to choose
I've no thought in the waste to abide
I have naught to regret, nor to lose".

This encapsulates his prophetic ideas which we shall take up DV next time.

He died in Bournemouth on the 29th April 1882. He lived in the Bible and recommended thinking in scripture. What was it that caused him to develop his prophetic view?

There were a number of factors which were influential in the development of the Plymouth Brethren:

1. Prophetic revivalism
2. Worldliness in the Churches

3. Biblical reconsideration of the Church

Darby began to conceive the view that the Church had failed, (Darby's letters Vol p 42, 94, 113, 167) in 1840. It was an intuitive view, I think, fostered by what he thought he saw in the world around him. The great danger of course, is that men interpret the Bible in terms of what they see around them, rather than interpreting what they see from the Bible. In this, his view of the Church was not Biblical. We do well to note Paul's statement in Romans (9 v 1 - 7). In mere outward terms Israel had failed to aspire to the grace of God. This was not a failure of the Grace of God (v6) or even of Israel, for Paul goes on to re-evaluate Israel in terms of the true and spiritual Israel. No doubt, had Darby applied the Pauline argument to the Church, he too should have concluded that not "all are the church which are of the church".

Having, therefore, relegated the church to the position of failure, what then is the purpose of God in the world today? Here dispensationalists postulated that the church was a parenthesis (brackets or gap) in the plan of God. The church was held to be distinct from the nation of Israel under the O.T. for whom God still had a plan, and that this restored Israel would take over from the Church during the Millennium and carry out God's purpose.

It follows that if there are two groups (the Church and Israel) and that they have different purposes. The essential differences of the two groups must be maintained. This they do by making a difference between the Kingdom of Heaven (for the church) and the Kingdom of God⁷ (for Israel). The Church is therefore heavenly and Israel Earthly with an Earthly expectation! This leads to a glaring error relating to the person and work of Christ.

If Israel and the Church are to remain and maintain the distinctions of the two testaments, did Christ come to unite the two in one body? No they say! The real purpose of Christ's coming was to establish an earthly kingdom ruled from the literal throne of David (in which all O.T. prophecies would be fulfilled literally). He (Christ) clearly failed (sic!) to do so, hence this is reserved for the Millennium. Hence in effect they hold to a postponed Millennium. The rejection by the Jews, of Christ, led to his death on the cross! Therefore, in this system the cross is the failure of God, because man failed to consent, though you may well ask, "why should it succeed a second time?" The other point that naturally arises from this idea is that had the Jews accepted Christ and His Kingdom, then there was no need for the cross and men would have been saved by legal obedience. Hence the cross was not essential to salvation (another error).

We have therefore, at the root of Dispensation three fundamental errors concerning:

1. The Church
2. Salvation
3. The Kingdom

Let us therefore begin to outline and correct these errors.

⁷ Kingdom of God/Heaven are one and the same.

1) THE CHURCH

The dispensationalists claim that the Church was not known in the O.T. I remember having an argument with a dear brother on this and I pointed out (Acts 7 v 38) where the word EKKLESIA is used (see the use of ekklesia in the LXX for the assembly of Israel). He could not accept it! In fact the Church is mentioned at the beginning of the Bible and has always been present, typified in marriage (Gen 2 v 24, Eph 5 v 31, 32). The mystery is clearly revealed. There are not two brides (Israel and the Church) but just one bride! That this body comprises both Jews and Gentiles is expressed in (Eph 2 v 14-16). Neither was it God's purpose to use the O.T. Israel as the instrument of His plan, but the Church (Eph 3 v 10, 11). These scriptures and many others undermine the teaching of dispensationalism of a "failed church". It is indeed a glorious body. You will see if you think about it, that the error is perpetuated by the method of exposition. The O.T. is used to interpret the N.T., rather than letting the N.T. reveal the truth of the O.T.

2) SALVATION

Can we support the idea that men were ever saved by legal obedience to the Mosaic code? The answer is clearly no. If the ceremonial law had lasting value, then continuity was essential for us, but clearly they failed (Heb 10 v 1 ff). In this treatise the sacrificial system is designated a "shadow" of something greater (v 1) (Col 2 v 16, 17), just as Paul shows the law to be a schoolmaster (Gal 3 v 24) to bring us to Christ. By the one offering of His body on the tree we have sin dealt with (Heb 10 v 10). You cannot escape the thrust of the N.T. teachings that the cross was the focal point of the O.T. and not a mistake. It seems amazing that the Brethren who perhaps have done more than most to set forth the typology of the O.T. in terms of Christ, should shy away from accepting the necessity of atonement as the design of God's administration.

3) THE KINGDOM

Can we really make a difference in the terms Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven? Compare (Matt 10 v 7 and Luke 9 v 2). Was the ministry directed towards the perpetuation of two groups? I think not. See also (Matt 19 v 23, 24). The Kingdom of God is not postponed to the Millennium (for Israel on Earth) but was set forth by signs and wonders for the world during Jesus ministry (Matt 11 v 1-6, Is 29 v 18, Is 35 v 4-6). John the Baptist was not mistaken (Matt 11 vv 3-4) and he did not have to look to the future for a successful messiah. The Messiah was here.

Without wishing to go too far into the details of dispensationalism, I will sketch for you the outcome of the system, following on from these cardinal errors and the insistence upon O.T. literalism. You will see that it is similar to pre-millennialism, although pre-millennialists do not openly confess to these fundamental errors.

I should also perhaps state that the term dispensationalism came into existence and gained popularity through the efforts of one Cyrus Ingersoll Schofield. Schofield (b. 1843) was converted in 1879 and within 3 years was ordained as a congregational minister. Without formal training he proceeded to write his reference Bible, which popularised Darby's

teaching. This bible was the A.V. with explanatory notes, and did much to put the dispensationalist teachings to the forefront.

In this book the Bible was restructured to explain seven dispensations or ways that God governed the world (see p 149-150 Boettner, the Millennium). This of course is a quite arbitrary system with no clear back up from the Bible. It is wishful thinking. Oak trees from little apples grow.

Thus dispensationalism as a system was founded with its equally arbitrary and very complex view of eschatology (meaning 'last things' see accompanying diagram Fig. 6 and compare with pre-millennialist view Fig. 5). It takes a very legal and complicated mind to unravel and I fear one cannot accept it.

If there is one thing I have found in my study of scripture, it is that God's plan is elegantly simple (Mat 18 v 3). This does not mean that it is not profound and magnificent in its conception. It is altogether glorious and more so for its simplicity (1 Cor 1 v 18-21). Does it not strike you as strange that, that which has proceeded so smoothly and simply from the beginning should become so very difficult and complicated at the end? Bear this in mind?

One of the reasons that I am labouring over prophetic views in this study, is to put you all on guard. To cause you to see, that prophecy when handled apart from a consistent Biblical approach to revelation in general, causes repercussions in other areas of well established theology. Well might we say with Paul "O foolish Galatians", (Gal 3 v 1), "Who has bewitched you?"

And are we any the less guaranteed that we shall not fall into like errors? Are we saying that we have the truth and others do not? No, for we too are frail flesh, and must take heed lest when we think we stand we too fall!

Do not however, despise men like Darby, who with the early Brethren held a sincere love of Christ and the Saints and spent their lives in His service. They merely illustrate human weakness of which we are prone. It is seen too often in the scriptures in the lives of Abraham, David, Peter, but God did not cast them off. Their failures however, were not the failure of the word of God, but the failure to accept the word of God for what it is.

POSTMILLENNIALISM

We move away from the fantastic realm of the dispensationalist to a more orthodox view of the end times, namely, post-millennialism. This view you will recall looks to the coming of Christ immediately after (post-) the Millennium. It too has different forms, the older Augustinian form, holding the idea that the church would eventually rule on earth (a future view) and another holding it to be past with its blessings still being experienced. The Augustinian view (more common) is seemingly in line with the thoughts of (Rev 20 v 4 - 6).

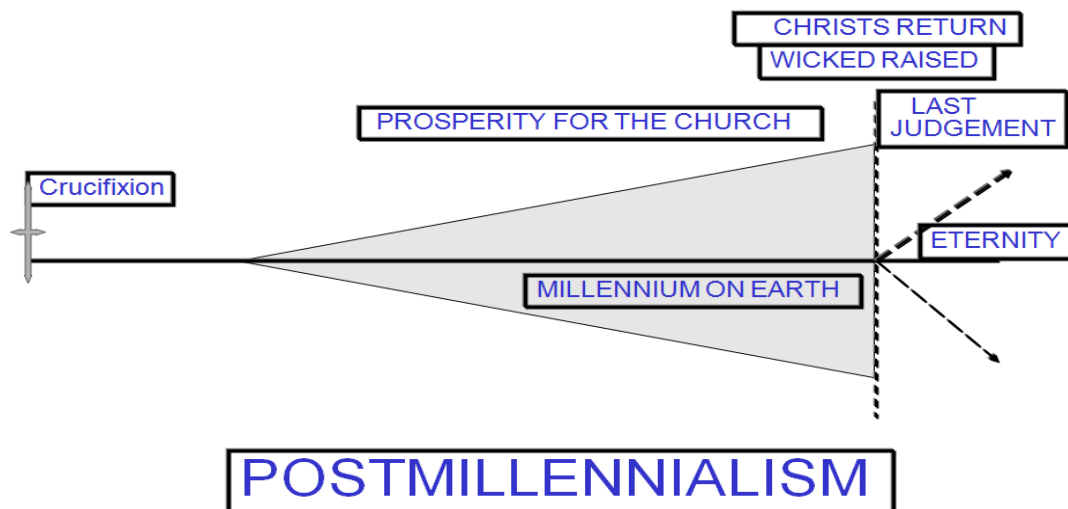


Figure 8. Postmillennialism overview

The key idea of post-millennialism is that the second coming is preceded by a golden age where the gospel holds sway over the whole earth in an unprecedented way. This does not mean that everyone will be converted but that the race of man-kind as a whole shall be saved. There is certainly much evidence in the bible to support this idea (Ps. 86 v 9, Ps 2 v 7, Ps 2 v 8, Ps 86 v 9, Ps 100 v 1).

Paul in Corinthians suggests the idea of the advancing Kingdom of God (1 Cor 15 v 20 - 28). This is in perfect harmony with the vision of the O.T. in Daniel, when he interprets the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2 v 44-45).

This idea of universalism certainly seems to have a foundation (Acts 15 v 17), although it doesn't mean the conversion of all nations. True, the world is the object of Christ's redemption (1 John 2 v 2, 1 John 4 v 14, John 1 v 29). However, a careful exegesis of verses like (John 3 v 16 - 17) much favoured by evangelicals does not show the extent of redemption, but the manner in which God's love is manifested. (He so loved the world **that He gave**). Likewise the parable of the leaven (Mat 13 v 33) doesn't mean that the wheat is turned into leaven - this shows the penetrating power of the kingdom, not the converting power.

This must cause us to think about the purpose of the gospel. Is it for the purpose of converting men or calling them out? It is not merely the preaching of the word but the effectual application of the word by the Holy Spirit. We must determine not the universality of the preaching (which is clear) but the universality of the effectual application, before we can say that it is God's purpose to convert the whole world. A look at Paul's preaching on Mars hill (Acts 17) shows the universality but non-effect of the message.

I must also point out in considering the preaching of the gospel, that it carries in it (when preached correctly) not only universal redemption but **universal condemnation** (Mark 16 v 15 - 16). When we view the concept of judiciary, it holds two principles, namely **blessing and curse** (see Deut. 30 ff). This is taught by Paul in Romans (13 v 3 - 4). There is no reason to see the reign of Christ in different terms.

I have often considered how quickly the nation of England reverted to formalism and Papism after the Puritan Commonwealth. It virtually happened overnight. One might have considered the Commonwealth as the start of the Millennium with its strong Christian bias. Yet it is clear that many of the people were held in submission, not voluntarily, and were only too ready to jump at the chance to throw it off. Read Pepys, to get a contemporary view. You see, it is possible to gain a semblance of religious conformity by the power of government, but this does not mean spiritual conformity and mass conversion.

We should not however, even if we do not hold to a concept of universal salvation, diminish our efforts in preaching a universal gospel. It is not the outcome of the taste that should govern our motives. The outcome is not our business but God's. Like Paul, we must know our place in the plan of redemption (1 Cor 3 v 4 ff).

The post-millennial view holds that the world is getting better (page 38 L. Boettner, The Millennium) and becoming 'Christianised'. Rushdoony writes the foreword to Marcellus Kik's book dealing with the post-millennialist view (An Eschatology of Victory). For him (page ix) this doctrinal view is essential to the triumph of Christ. I must admit though, without this introduction, I would have thought that the book was a treatise on amillennialism. That apart, I sense in a lot of the writing of Rushdoony, which I agree with and find edifying, that he is looking more towards the legal application of righteousness through the application of the law of Moses. I am beginning to have doubts about this approach. I do not see the mission of Christ as one which advances the Mosaic law. The New Covenant is not a covenant of law but a covenant with Christ. The law is a school master (Gal 3 v 24) to bring us to Christ. A Christian legalised world is not the goal of Christianity (Rom 8 v 1-4). Christianity is not content to see mere outward conformity. The Kingdom of Christ is not of this world.

It is this spiritual dimension that is often missing in the idea of a Christianised world. The world is clearly bigger than the visual dimension attached to it by so many (Eph 5 v 11 ff).

You must then ask yourselves if you support this view, is the Kingdom of God advancing to a greater victory over the world of men? Is there going to be a greater awareness of the power and rule of Christ? What does He say Himself concerning his coming (Matt 24 v 36 - 42)? Does He come to a watching world or a world still in part oblivious to the signs of the times, just as in Noah's day? Are the tares suppressed by the power of the Godly wheat? (Matt 13 v 36-39). Christ will triumph but in the end but if the days are like the days of Noah, we shall see few souls saved.